

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL & TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Trowbridge, Wiltshire

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126495

Headteacher: Mr Brendan Wall

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 12th – 14th February 2001

Inspection number: 187775

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wingfield Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire

Postcode: BA14 9EN

Telephone number: 01225 350001

Fax number: 01225 350002

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Michael Thorp

Date of previous inspection: May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
3268	George Knights	Registered inspector
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector
10561	Angela Fraser	Team inspector
10010	George Wallace	Team inspector
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

TWA INSPECTIONS LTD
5 Lakeside
Werrington
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE4 6QZ

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The St. Augustine's School and Technology College is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18. There are 844 pupils on roll, making the school slightly smaller than the average. The school is situated in the town of Trowbridge in Wiltshire. The school serves the Roman Catholic community from a wide area, including Trowbridge and the surrounding towns and villages. Around 80 per cent of pupils come from five main partner primary schools, the remainder coming from over 25 other schools. The school has expanded in recent years and is heavily over-subscribed. Since the previous inspection, a sixth form has been added to the school. Numbers in the sixth form are expected to rise significantly. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. There is little adult unemployment in the area and hence the number of students eligible for free school meals is, at just over 3 per cent, very low.

For several years, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been above the national average. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds or with English as an additional language is very low. About 13 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below the national average, and the number of pupils with statements of special educational need, at less than 1 per cent, is well below the national average. Over 90 per cent of pupils in the school continue their education when they reach the age of 16, either at the school or in other schools. Around 70 per cent of students who leave the school after sixth form study follow courses in higher education.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Augustine's School and Technology College is a very good school with many outstanding features. Standards are consistently well above the national average as a result of very good teaching which enables pupils to learn very well. Leadership is inspirational and many aspects of management are very good. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school fully lives out its mission statement in helping each person to achieve their potential.
- Inspirational leadership stimulates the commitment of all to excellence.
- Pupils learn very well because of very good teaching throughout the school.
- The school inspires pupils to adopt outstanding attitudes and values and to relate exceptionally well to others.
- It takes great care of all its pupils and nurtures their development.
- It provides a wealth of opportunities for all pupils to learn.

What could be improved

- Arrangements for ensuring that strategic plans for long-term development are in place.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved levels of attainment at both Key Stages 3 and 4 since the previous inspection. The school has expanded, with the addition of a sixth form. Results in the sixth form have risen considerably over the past three years. Facilities in the school have been improved, especially in physical education and technology. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

The school has worked hard on the issues identified in the previous report. The timetabling arrangements have been reviewed, with a better balance of lessons throughout the week. The school has kept the length of lessons under review and has ensured that there is no significant loss of impetus as a result of the long teaching sessions in most subjects. Work in lessons is now varied very well to meet the requirements of individual pupils and students.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3 tests	A	A	A	C
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	B	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The school's national test results for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science have been consistently well above the national average for the three years to 2000. When compared with similar schools¹, results in 2000 were above average in mathematics and were in line with the average in English. Results in science were below the similar school average, mainly because the school concentrates its attention in science on GCSE modules for Year 9 pupils, rather than on national tests for pupils of this age. All pupils learn well during Key Stage 3 and the very good results reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. Pupils currently in Year 9 are achieving very well and standards of work seen throughout Key Stage 3 are well above the national average.

Results in GCSE examinations have been consistently well above the national average for the past three years. In 2000, GCSE results were also well above the average for similar schools, indicating that pupils learn very successfully during Key Stage 4. The school ensures that all pupils are able to achieve well. Targets set for the past two years have been exceeded, partly because those set were not sufficiently challenging on the basis of results achieved in recent years. Targets set for 2001 are not challenging, given results in the past three years and the standards of work seen. Pupils currently in the school are achieving very well at Key Stage 4.

Results in A-level examinations at the end of sixth form study have improved considerably in the three years for which the school has presented students for examination. In 2000, results were above the average for sixth forms nationally. Students currently in the sixth form are achieving well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' and students' attitudes to school and to work are excellent. They make the most of the rich range of opportunities available and are highly motivated. Particularly impressive is the willingness with which they play an active part in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is excellent. The level of self-discipline of pupils and students is excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school, both among pupils and students and with adults, are excellent. Personal development is also excellent. Pupils and students are friendly, composed and mature, with a high degree of sensitivity to one another.

¹ Similar schools comparisons are made by comparing results of this school with results for schools which have similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Attendance	Attendance is well above the national average. The level of unauthorised absence is very low.
------------	---

The excellent attitudes and behaviour of pupils and students are distinctive features of this school. They are central to the successful creation of a school community built on care and respect. All members of the community are valued as individuals and this results, in turn, in a very high level of commitment to others.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is very good throughout the school and is particularly impressive at Key Stage 3. This enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language, to learn very successfully. Teaching is better than at the time of the previous inspection. It is very good in half of all lessons and is good in the vast majority of the remainder. Only very rarely is teaching unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good overall in English and science and good overall in mathematics. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is effective throughout the school. Careful attention is paid by teachers to ensuring that their lessons meet the needs of all pupils and students and especially those with special educational needs. The most significant strength of teaching is the way in which teachers challenge and stimulate pupils and students through questioning and by encouraging learners to become actively involved in investigating, experimenting and problem-solving. This encourages self-confidence and ensures that all pupils and students are actively involved in their own learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a rich and varied curriculum. This stimulates and inspires pupils and students and engages them fully in the life and work of the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is very good and is a strength of the school. Great care is taken to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of each individual. The support offered to these pupils is exemplary.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are few pupils and students for whom English is an additional language. All are well integrated into the community of the school and are enabled to achieve well in all subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. The school successfully extends the horizons for all. Nurturing the spiritual and moral development of all pupils and students is an unambiguous priority in the school. Through assemblies, lessons and a range of other activities, the school makes a very strong contribution to many aspects of pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care of pupils and students is very good. Staff take a personal interest in all the individuals within their care. As a result, pupils feel secure and valued and are able to work successfully in an atmosphere in which respect and positive relationships flourish. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress and for using academic information to guide target setting are in place.

The range of opportunities for pupils and students to participate in activities beyond lessons is impressive and all activities are very popular. The school fully meets its statutory requirements with regard to the curriculum. The procedures for supporting pupils with special educational needs are sensitively applied. Parents are encouraged to play a full part in the life and work of the school and to support their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher is strong and inspirational. He is supported very well by an enthusiastic and dedicated staff. Management of the school is very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are effective. They are very committed, active and involved in the life and work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Arrangements for evaluating many aspects of the school's work, including teaching and learning, are very effective. Evaluation of the school development plan is less well developed.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of the resources available to it.

The school's aims and mission statement are clear and provide a very good framework for development. The school works very well on a day-to-day basis and there are many plans for future improvement. These are not, however, drawn together into a well documented long-term strategic plan for the development of the school. The principles of best value, therefore, are thus only applied to a limited extent.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Thirty-eight parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector prior to the inspection and 55 per cent of parents returned a questionnaire expressing their views about the school.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has high expectations of their children's achievement. The school is well led and managed. Behaviour in the school is good. They feel comfortable when approaching the school with a question or a problem. The school helps their children become mature and responsible. The school offers an interesting range of activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of parents felt that the school does not work closely with parents. A similarly small number of parents did not feel that they were kept well informed about how well their children were getting on. A small number of parents were concerned about the amount of homework set. In some cases, concern was that there was too much.

Inspectors fully support the very positive views of the parents. The school is very well led and managed. It does have high expectations, both of pupils' and students' achievements and of their behaviour. Pupils and students are helped to become mature and responsible young people. The range of activities provided outside lessons is very good. All parents are welcomed into the school and staff are very responsive when parents approach them with questions or problems. Inspectors do not agree with the small number of parents who suggested that the school does not work closely with them or keep them well informed. Procedures for reporting on pupil progress are very effective and the school has good arrangements in place for working closely with parents. Homework is set regularly, with clear guidelines

to pupils and students about what is expected of them. In general, the homework tasks set are of appropriate length and challenge and they link well with work in class.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school fully lives out its mission statement in helping each person to achieve their potential

1. The school is unified in its commitment to ensuring that all pupils² who attend St. Augustine's reach their full potential, both in terms of academic achievement and in terms of their wider personal development. This is achieved through very good teaching that is a feature of the school and as a result of the high level of dedication of staff and governors in ensuring that the school achieves its aims. The school prospectus states that the true aim of the school is 'to develop a vibrant and committed thirst for knowledge and experience to achieve the highest levels of excellence in all areas of school life'. This is achieved very successfully. The prospectus also refers to positive affirmation as a key element in realising the school's goals and this eloquently describes what actually happens in the school. The opening statement in the prospectus makes reference to everyone having 'an equal part to play in putting Christ at our heart'. The Christian ethos in the school is very strong and the Gospel values of love, care and concern for others are very evident.
2. In terms of academic achievement, the school does very well. At the end of Key Stage 3, results in national tests have been well above the national average for several years in English, mathematics and science. This represents good levels of achievement, taking into account the fact that pupils entered the school from primary schools achieving above the national average. In 2000, results in English tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were in line with the average for similar schools and in mathematics were above the similar schools' average. In science, results were below the similar school average, but this is a consequence of focusing attention in science on GCSE modular examinations rather than on end of key stage tests. Elsewhere in the curriculum, teacher assessments in 2000 indicated that standards were well above average in design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and music. In French, standards were also well above average, with all pupils reaching at least the national average level and over two thirds working at least one level higher. Standards in art and in physical education in 2000 were above the national average. Pupils currently studying in Key Stage 3 are achieving very well as a result of very good teaching. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide stimulating lessons which help pupils achieve standards which are well above what would be expected nationally.
3. When pupils take GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, their overall attainment is very good and indicates that they have continued to learn successfully. In 2000, results in the school were, overall, well above both the national and similar school averages. This continued a pattern established over several years. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades was, at 52 per cent, 14 percentage points higher than the national average. All pupils leaving the school in 2000 gained at least one GCSE grade G or better. In almost all subjects, including English, mathematics and science, results were well above the national average. The school is concerned to ensure that all pupils, no matter what their level of prior

² The school refers to 'pupils' in Key Stages 3 and 4 and 'students' in the sixth form. In this report, 'pupil' is used to mean all pupils and students in the school, unless the context implies otherwise. 'Student' is used to refer to those who are in the sixth form.

attainment, achieve their potential and leave the school with accreditation for what they have achieved. Significant, therefore, is the fact that the percentage of students gaining at least one GCSE grade G or better is very high when compared nationally. Results in all subjects in 2000 were significantly above the national average, with both boys and girls achieving creditable standards. At both key stages, standards are higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection, though improvement has been slower, based on figures for the past five years, than the improvement nationally.

4. The school established a sixth form about five years ago and has been presenting students for examination at advanced level since 1998. Initially, results were below the national average for sixth forms, but have improved so that, in 2000, results were above average. A-level results in 2000 placed the school among the top four schools in Wiltshire and among the best Catholic comprehensive schools in the country. Almost half of all students taking these examinations gained A or B grades. The sixth form continues to grow in numbers and students currently in the school are achieving standards in line with those of their predecessors in 2000.
5. The school intends that all pupils, no matter what their prior attainment, background or talents, should be encouraged to do their best. Within the school there is a significant number of pupils who have special educational needs. These needs are well known to all staff who, in their planning and teaching, take account of what each individual will need to help them achieve well. Some pupils need additional support in classrooms and this is offered skilfully and sensitively by both teachers and support staff. A very good example of this occurred in a Year 7 French lesson. The teacher carefully ensured that questions were phrased in ways that different pupils could understand and respond to, whilst the support assistant helped specific pupils with their phrasing so that they could join in fully with other members of the class. Work to support these pupils is well co-ordinated and monitored and parents are kept well informed about what the school is doing to help their children. A small number of pupils have English as an additional language. Once again their needs are well known and sensitive support enables these few pupils to be well integrated into school life and to make good progress. The school recognises that some pupils are either gifted or have specific talents. Both in lessons and through a range of other activities, staff in the school work very hard and very effectively to ensure that these pupils are achieving their full potential. An illustration of this was that, at the time of the inspection, pupils with a particular aptitude for music were being helped to prepare for the school's *Young Musician of the Year* competition.
6. Pupils are encouraged to participate in wider school life in order to help them develop fully as members of the school and wider community. This may be through participation in an excellent range of extra-curricular activities or in service to others. Pupils participating in many sporting activities, for example, have the opportunity to develop their social skills and also to enhance their understanding of fair play and respect for others. The Duke of Edinburgh Award similarly provides a wealth of character-building opportunities for the many pupils who work towards it. In these and other activities, pupils are enthusiastic about what they gain from taking part and they appreciate the time and care given by teachers in providing this wealth of activity. Sixth form students, similarly, have great scope for taking part in activities beyond class study. In the debating society, for example, students are able to gain confidence in presenting arguments and in weighing their views against those of others. Members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society are able to offer service in the community, thus helping them to recognise the need for mutual support in society.

7. The school's mission statement refers to helping every person to achieve their potential. In meeting this aim the school takes into account the needs of staff as well as pupils. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school or to the profession are very good and overall professional development arrangements ensure that all staff are able to keep up to date with developments in education. The school has been very supportive of a significant number of teachers who have, over recent years, studied for higher degrees and this, too, illustrates the commitment to supporting the personal and academic development of all members of its community. The school has put in place performance management arrangements, as a result of which all members of staff are working toward achieving objectives related to improving the effectiveness of their work in school. The recent award of Investors in People status is a recognition of the care the school takes to help all who work there to achieve their best.

Inspirational leadership stimulates the commitment of all to excellence

8. The headteacher provides strong, visionary leadership which serves as an inspiration to others. Although only recently appointed, having been a deputy headteacher in the school, he has established a very effective senior management team which gives him very good support. Very clear definition of roles and effective delegation of responsibilities to members of this team has laid a firm foundation for the greater involvement of all staff. The headteacher is encouraging and enabling middle managers to assume a more strategic role as part of the process for engaging more staff in management and in shaping the future direction of the school. He has re-established an effective meeting structure, which enables all staff to make a contribution to decision-making. Staff are responding very positively to these initiatives and are making a significant contribution to the improvements taking place.
9. Highly effective leadership creates a firm basis for the management of the school. For the past three years there has been an on-going systematic programme of departmental review. As each department has been reviewed, strengths have been highlighted and praised, whilst areas for improvement have been identified. In the review of drama, for example, significant attention was placed on the strengths of teaching and on how the teaching of drama could be further improved. Where improvement has been needed in these reviews, careful attention has been paid to providing the necessary support, either through training or by the provision of additional resources. This review programme has been a major factor in bringing about overall improvement in the school and especially an improvement in the quality of what happens in classrooms. As the programme has developed the rigour with which reviews have been undertaken has increased, reflecting a growing awareness of the need to focus on those aspects of the school's work that most directly help achieve its aims. Plans are in place to involve heads of department in the next round of reviews and this will help to improve the skills of these middle managers in evaluating the quality of work in their departments.
10. A very positive feature of the school is its commitment to continue to question what it does. For example, the school is considering whether the current arrangements, whereby most lessons last for 80 minutes, are making the best use of the time available. Within this, they are considering whether the overall length of the teaching week, which is considerably longer than that found in most secondary schools, is inhibiting other activities in the school. Also under review are the arrangements for organising the programme of care for pupils and students. Currently the school has a system based on year-groups, but is considering the advantages and disadvantages of changing to a house system involving grouping pupils across year groups. These

are examples of positive leadership in evaluating the effectiveness of existing systems and structures in the school.

11. Governors play a full part in providing leadership in the school. They are active, very committed, involved and responsible. In particular, they are very careful in the monitoring of matters related to finance. The chair of the finance committee, for example, regularly meets with the headteacher and administrative staff to ensure that spending is in line with budget intentions. All governors' statutory duties are fulfilled and governors are becoming more aware of the contribution they need to make in shaping the strategic direction of the school. As individuals, governors are linked to different subjects and aspects of school life and this helps them to be well informed about what is happening on a day to day basis. Through a good committee structure, governors are able to make well-informed contributions to aspects of their work. They exercise their roles as critical friends very well, challenging and probing to ensure that the work of the school is determined by its mission statement and aims. The headteacher and the chair of the governing body have a very effective working relationship and chairs of the various committees play a full part in maintaining this relationship between governors and the school as a whole.
12. The school has seized many opportunities to help achieve its aims. A significant example of this is the great benefit derived from achieving Technology College status. This has not only provided additional resources, but has been a major motivating factor in bringing about significant improvements in many areas of the curriculum including science and technology. Planning for Technology College status is a good example of long-term strategic planning. Elsewhere in the school, long-term strategic planning is less evident, particularly in agreeing and documenting the main priorities which will guide future development in the school. Staff and governors have recently undertaken a detailed review of the school's mission statement. To help them in this they considered the point to which they wish the school to progress by 2005. The new mission statement has now been agreed and is well known to parents and pupils. What has yet to be done is to identify the priorities for improvement which will enable what happens in the school to fully match the intentions within the mission statement.
13. Within the school, it is recognised that staff are a very valuable resource. Careful attention has been paid to providing the necessary staff training to maintain and improve teaching. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are very effective, helping them quickly to become part of a very strong team. All staff respond very positively to the encouragement and support they receive and their commitment to helping the school improve still further is impressive. Staff work in a very positive atmosphere where they feel valued and trusted. They, therefore, have the confidence to be innovative in their teaching. This has been a major factor in ensuring that teachers use strategies which help pupils to achieve very well and to gain enjoyment from their learning. A very good example of this occurred in a Year 13 physics lesson. Here the teacher used a 'brainstorming' technique which enabled all students to participate with enthusiasm in a revision lesson on work related to magnetic fields.
14. The headteacher is not only an inspiration to staff, but also to pupils and students. He and his colleagues encourage all pupils to give of their best and the response is impressive. The school makes it very clear that its greatest asset is the children who attend. Pupils thus feel valued, very well cared for and supported. In turn, they seek the best for themselves and for others. Opportunities are taken to praise and celebrate the achievements of pupils, both in events such as assemblies and in a book of celebration in the main foyer of the school. Staff are excellent role models for

pupils, both in their enthusiasm for learning and also in the way they care for and respect others. Pupils in this school are privileged to be able to work with such a dedicated team of staff.

Pupils learn very well because of very good teaching throughout the school

15. Teaching throughout the school is very good and is particularly impressive at Key Stage 3. Around half of all teaching is either very good or excellent and well over nine tenths of all teaching is at least good. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching in the school. Pupils are provided with stimulating and interesting lessons, to which they respond very positively. As a result they learn very successfully.
16. At the heart of this very good teaching and learning are the excellent relationships between teachers and learners. These are based on mutual respect and a genuine care for one another. Pupils recognise that all teachers know their subjects very well and are able to present the curriculum in interesting, exciting and challenging ways. Similarly, teachers are aware of the strengths and needs of each individual and they plan their lessons to take account of these differences. This aspect of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. It means that all pupils, including those who are talented or gifted, have special educational needs or do not speak English as their first or main language, can participate fully in lessons and thus make good progress. In a Year 9 design and technology lesson where pupils were working on the graphic layout for a package, the teacher paid careful attention to the needs of each pupil, including those with special educational needs, individually. This ensured that all made good progress, the one-to-one support having enabled all to apply themselves fully to the task. The excellent relationships between teachers and learners help to ensure that there is rarely any misbehaviour in lessons. Teachers, by showing their respect for pupils, encourage good behaviour and a respectful response from them.
17. Almost all lessons are characterised by a variety of well-co-ordinated activities, designed to maintain the interest, motivation and effort of the pupils. In return, pupils respond very positively. They relish the opportunities provided for extended investigation, research and enquiry. They are keen to join in discussion and debate and they grasp the opportunities offered to learn with enthusiasm. The commitment of pupils in a Year 7 dance lesson as they developed a routine to a *James Bond* theme was impressive. As they worked together, they took delight in developing sequences of balances and supports with one another. Teachers' planning is centred around the identification of clear objectives about what they want pupils to learn and these objectives are discussed at the beginning of lessons. Often they are displayed in classrooms so that they can be referred to as the lesson progresses. This helps pupils maintain a sharp focus on what they are doing and why. Many teachers organise lessons so that there is time, toward the end, for a review of learning with pupils. These reviews are based on the objectives and pupils are encouraged to make judgements about how much they have achieved and what they have learnt during the lesson. In a Year 11 English lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully used the objectives at the end of a lesson to review with pupils what they had gained from a lesson focusing on how promotional devices in writing are used to attract the reader. Teachers use homework tasks as a means of helping pupils to develop good independent study skills. Homework tasks are almost invariably closely related to the topics being studied in lessons and pupils' work is followed up well in subsequent lessons. The school provides clear guidance to pupils about how to organise the homework and this is recorded in pupils' planners. This helps parents take a direct interest in their children's work.

18. Pupils are helped to achieve very well because teachers have high expectations of them. This manifests itself in planning, but also in the work that teachers do with pupils. Tasks are challenging, requiring learners to think, reason and test their ideas. A distinctive characteristic of a great deal of the very good teaching is the way teachers ask questions of pupils. Rarely are teachers satisfied with initial answers. Pupils are encouraged to give extended answers and to deal with supplementary questions. In a Year 9 biology lesson, for instance, the teacher's skilful, probing, questioning helped pupils to make clear statements of their ideas about the impact of smoking on the human body. This atmosphere of questioning is extended, in many lessons, to involve pupils in posing their own questions and then to seek for answers. Frequently, pupils contribute to discussions by presenting their ideas to the class. A good example of this was a lower attaining girl in a Year 11 mathematics lesson who voluntarily came to the whiteboard to present her ideas about how to find the area of an irregular shape. Her confidence about contributing to class discussion in this way indicated that the teacher had created an atmosphere of trust in the class. This is the case in the vast majority of lessons. In many subjects, pupils are taught in mixed ability classes and teachers use questioning very skilfully as one of many strategies for ensuring that pupils of all levels of prior attainment are able to contribute and to achieve good standards of work.
19. An advantage of the present lesson timing is that pupils have sufficient time to develop and follow through an extended idea or activity. Teachers have recognised the potential of these long sessions and take full opportunity to provide a rich variety of activities within them. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson for lower attaining pupils, for example, the teacher was able to set up a number of practical situations to help pupils gain a good level of understanding of how shapes were transformed under reflection or translation. The extended lesson allowed time to look at both of these transformations, to undertake some practical work, to discuss outcomes and to explore some of the ideas which the pupils came up with as they undertook their investigations using mirrors.
20. Teachers have a good understanding of how well each pupil is doing. This is because the school has good systems in place for overall testing and assessment of pupils and for communicating this information to all teachers. Also, teachers regularly assess the work of pupils on a day-to-day basis. This is done both through careful attention to observing the work that pupils are doing in lessons and through regular marking of pupils' work. In the best practice, there are many examples of teachers providing very helpful comments on pupils' work, guiding them on what they need to do to improve. As in so many other aspects of work in the school, teachers' marking acknowledges the efforts made. The display of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school is very good. It helps create a stimulating environment and also celebrates their achievements.

It inspires pupils to adopt outstanding attitudes and values and to relate exceptionally well to others

21. Pupils are enabled and encouraged to take full advantage of the rich opportunities on offer to them. This they do with a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm. The attitudes of pupils to lessons are excellent. They work very hard and show real enthusiasm for their studies. This was illustrated by the approach of a group of Year 11 pupils who, in a geography lesson, were exploring how development can be measured. They talked intelligently, maturely and with real interest about the scope and limitations of using photographic evidence. Pupils are confident in trying out new

ideas, expressing their thoughts and asking questions. They work diligently, taking high levels of pride in the presentation of their work. On many occasions pupils get excited about their work, though in a controlled and mature way. These very positive attitudes, alongside very good teaching, are major factors in the very good levels of achievement throughout the school. Pupils also participate enthusiastically in a wide range of other activities beyond lessons, both in music and sporting activities and in a wide range of other clubs, societies and events. These wide-ranging interests are carried into the sixth form, where students provide good role models to younger pupils. Sixth form students offer valuable service to the school community and in doing so have very good opportunities to develop their own leadership skills. Throughout the school, pupils are helped to develop their individuality within a supportive community.

22. The school is a very harmonious community. A strong feature of the life of the school is that 'every second counts' and pupils and students respond well by engaging in a wealth of activity. There is thus little space for less than exemplary behaviour. On the rare occasions when the behaviour of a small minority of pupils does not meet agreed standards, the school has positive and supportive arrangements for helping these pupils to modify their own behaviour so that they, and others, can work successfully. Generally, pupils act with composure and dignity. Whilst mostly lively and animated they can, when, appropriate, be reflective and they can bring a sense of serenity and peace to occasions such as assemblies.
23. Pupils are caring and concerned for one another. There is a high level of sensitivity to the feelings of others, for example, when pupils are working in classes alongside others with special educational needs. Pupils with specific difficulties are well supported by their peers, who take pleasure from helping wherever they can. This care and concern for others extends beyond the school, through charity work and initiatives such as the *Ceiling Project*, where sixth form students go into a prison to help by painting ceilings. Through assemblies, work in tutor groups and lessons throughout the school, staff skilfully and successfully guide pupils toward adopting a value system based on the Christian Gospel. All members of this community enjoy the company of others and this is particularly evident when large numbers of pupils come together, for example, in assemblies or in the dining room. Boys and girls mix very well together, both in lessons and around the school.
24. The school ensures that the personal development of pupils is excellent. Pupils are mature and responsible young adults. They are friendly, assured and composed. They are encouraged to use their initiative and to take responsibility for their own learning. A good example of this is the way in which they are encouraged, through the use of their 'planners', to organise their study outside the classroom. Sixth form students also have excellent opportunities, within the framework of school activities, to develop as young adults. Work on the school bank, serving as prefects, organising pantomimes and joining in activities organised by external organisations such as Amnesty International and the St. Vincent de Paul Society are just some of the opportunities offered to these students.
25. Perhaps one of the most straightforward but significant features which illustrates the positive attitudes of pupils to the school is the level of attendance, which is well above the national average. This pattern of regular attendance at school is a significant factor in helping achieve very good standards of work. The very low level of unauthorised absence is an indication of the commitment of both pupils and their parents to ensuring that pupils attend regularly.

It takes great care of all its pupils, nurturing their development

26. The school has very good procedures for pastoral care, with heads of year and tutors playing central roles in ensuring the general well-being of all pupils and students. Arrangements for child protection are very good and are integrated into the overall concern for the welfare of all who attend the school. Because of the care and concern for them, pupils and students feel safe in the school. They are confident that if they have any cause for concern it will be dealt with sensitively, skilfully and promptly. As in other aspects of school life, the arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are very good examples of the Christian ethos of the school being lived out in full.
27. Tutors play a front-line role in monitoring all aspects of pupils' and students' development. They have an effective overview of pupils' behaviour, personal development and how well they are doing with their studies. Heads of year provide very good support to their tutor teams. Tutors and heads of year have progressively become much more involved in monitoring pupils' progress and they play a central part in setting targets for individual pupils. This is particularly a feature of work with pupils in Key Stage 3 and helps to motivate these pupils to improve. It also helps lay a firm foundation for their studies in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
28. In only one regard does the school not care well for its pupils. The school does not have a medical room in which it can treat injured pupils or where pupils who do not feel well may have a space to rest. Currently, attention to injured or unwell pupils is given in the school foyer, which is neither suitably equipped nor sufficiently private.
29. Links between the school and parents are very strong. A regular pattern of meetings and reports is well established, ensuring that parents have a clear indication not only of how well their children are doing, but also what their future targets are. This represents a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Parents are encouraged to maintain a regular dialogue with the school by commenting in pupils' planners and both parents and staff find this a very effective means of maintaining close contact. Parents are always welcomed into the school as a means of helping maintain contact so that the support and care of pupils can be maintained at a high standard.
30. The school is very concerned, within its overall policy of equality of opportunity and access, to make all pupils feel fully included. To this end, the care provided for pupils with special educational needs and their parents is very good. The individual needs of pupils are carefully assessed and kept under regular review. All staff are provided with the necessary information to enable these pupils to take part in all activities and to make good progress in their studies. Similarly, those pupils for whom English is not their first language are supported and their work is carefully monitored to ensure that they are able to take a full part in all lessons.
31. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' and students' work are very good. They focus on providing information, both on a day-to-day basis and over time. This ensures that all pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Effective assessment provides teachers with the necessary information to guide them in their planning, so that courses and lessons are well matched to the needs of their learners. It also provides the necessary information to ensure that parents can be given a clear and accurate picture of how well their children are doing and what they, as parents, can do to provide support and encouragement at home.

It provides a wealth of opportunities for all pupils to learn

32. The school offers all pupils a wide range of opportunities to learn, both in timetabled lessons and in a range of other activities. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 builds on what pupils have studied in their primary schools. Staff at the school have established constructive relationships with their colleagues in the main partner primary schools in order to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education. These links are particularly good in terms of the transfer of assessment information about individual pupils. They are less strong regarding transfer of information about the curriculum and the learning experiences which pupils have had in their primary schools.
33. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. For the first three years in the school, work covers all subjects of the National Curriculum, with opportunities for pupils to study a second modern foreign language. In science, pupils are prepared, by the end of Year 9, to take GCSE single science modules. At Key Stage 4, pupils have a wide range of courses from which to choose, including the opportunity to study three separate sciences. At both key stages, the curriculum is enriched by a very good programme of personal, social and health education, taught within the wider programme of religious education. This deals with sex and drugs education and provides a good programme of careers education and guidance, which includes a work experience programme. Whilst the school does not offer a vocational element to the curriculum, it does enable pupils to do business studies at Key Stage 4. A very small number of Key Stage 4 pupils who find full-time work in the school a significant challenge are similarly supported through the provision of a work-related curriculum. These pupils follow a course which ensures that they study basic subjects, together with additional courses suited to their needs and interests. By offering this course the school successfully encourages these pupils to continue in full-time study. Overall, pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 thus have a rich variety of experiences which prepare them well for further study and for adult life.
34. The sixth form curriculum offers students a wide range of options, with well over 20 courses at A-level and AS-level. School staff have successfully embraced the recent changes in national arrangements for sixth form study and students are benefiting from the wider range of courses they can study. The addition of the sixth form has had a positive affect on the curriculum elsewhere in the school, for instance, in improvements to resources and in the greater awareness of staff to what follows on from the courses in Key Stage 4. Courses in many subjects have benefited from the school being awarded Technology College status. This has enabled a significant modernisation of many activities and pupils throughout the school are able to take advantage of very good facilities, thus enriching their learning. A particularly good example is in the improved resourcing for the teaching of science.
35. The community is seen as a good resource for helping pupils to learn. In many subjects, members of the community come into school to offer insights, talents or personal experiences, all of which enrich lessons. Good links exist with business and industry and this, too, benefits learning. Very good use is made of fieldwork and other trips, enabling pupils to learn at first-hand in the wider community, both in this country and abroad. Resources are plentiful in most subjects and teachers use them well to enrich pupils' experiences in lessons.
36. The contribution which the school makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good. The school successfully extends and expands

the horizons of its pupils and students, offering them a place in which to grow as learners. It is the unambiguous priority of the headteacher to foster pupils' spiritual and moral development, and these aspects of the school's work are excellent. The school lives up to its mission statements in demonstrating how far it values its pupils, by celebrating achievement and rewarding everyone for their efforts. Merit awards are presented to pupils in class and year assemblies on a weekly basis and there are many other ways in which success is celebrated.

37. Assemblies for each year group are of excellent quality, making a strong contribution to spiritual and moral development, whilst also providing pupils with a valuable social experience in meeting together in a large group. Time is spent in prayer and reflection, both in assemblies and in daily tutor periods. The school thus fully meets the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all. Spiritual and moral issues are highlighted in study in many subjects. Year 9 pupils studying *Macbeth* in English lessons, for example, deepened their understanding of spiritual and moral issues as they focused on some of the themes of tragedy and evil in the play. In music and drama, pupils are encouraged to reflect on a range of themes and ideas and to empathise with others and this contributes successfully to pupils' spiritual development.
38. The school provides an enormous range of opportunities for pupils and students to develop their social awareness. From working collaboratively in lessons, through meeting in big groups, both formally and informally, and through participating in the wide range of activities provided in the school, young people learn how to live and work together, providing mutual support. The school helps pupils look beyond the school community and their family networks. The wide range of activities supporting charities, and the many other initiatives, all help to provide a real sense of community.
39. The school's contribution to cultural development is very strong. Pupils are helped to a very good level of awareness of their cultural heritage, whilst becoming increasingly aware of other religions, cultures and traditions. This has been achieved through work in many subjects, through activities in clubs and societies and through trips and visits. Notable in making contributions to these aspects are the religious education, music, drama and English departments.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Arrangements for ensuring that strategic plans for long-term development are in place

40. The school has, for many years, produced development plans setting out what it intended to do as a means of improving overall provision. Sometimes these plans have been for a two-year period, but recently they have been for only a single year. Sections on overall activity in the school, departmental plans and work toward achieving aspects of the Local Education Authority's education development plan have been placed together to form the overall plan. There has, however, been very little attempt to link these three components together systematically. Concerns about the extent of the budget available have been seen as a reason for not planning beyond one year, rather than as a stimulus to identifying some long-term priorities to help guide budget planning. As such, the budget has tended to lead plans, rather than plans informing clear budget management.

41. This does not mean that the school does not have a clear idea about what the main priorities are. Nor does it mean that some long-term plans are not in place. The headteacher, governors and many staff are able to describe the direction in which the school is moving and the discussions which take place within governing body and senior management meetings articulate these plans and intentions. In some aspects of its work, such as that related to Technology College status, long-term plans are an essential feature and are set out in detail. What has been missing from the school, in recent years, is systematic consultation among all staff and governors about what the key priorities for the school are. Priorities which do exist have not been clearly documented, so not all staff are fully aware of them. There has not, therefore, been a requirement to plan within departments in a co-ordinated and coherent way in order to ensure that all are working toward the same goals.
42. The detailed whole school planning documentation has, over the past few years, tended to set out what is to be done, with the activity not linked to what it is intended should be achieved, either in terms of improved standards or provision. Arrangements are in place to check that work is undertaken, but because the intended outcomes are not made explicit, there are no mechanisms within the plan for evaluating whether the desired results have been achieved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. In order to ensure maintenance of very good standards and the on-going development of the school, staff and governors should improve the arrangements for ensuring that strategic plans for long-term improvement are in place, by:
- involving all staff and governors in identifying and agreeing key priorities for development;
 - linking priorities to school aims, especially those related to maintaining high standards;
 - drawing together the various strategic plans already in existence (for example, that relating to Technology College status) and including them in a whole school plan;
 - ensuring that departmental plans link closely with whole school priorities;
 - setting out plans on a long-term framework, with more detail for the coming year;
 - ensuring that all plans include a statement about the intended impact;
 - including arrangements for both monitoring progress on plans and evaluating their outcomes against intentions in order to gain a measure of success.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
13	38	40	7	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	695	149
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	27	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	114	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	95.0
National comparative data	93.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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	2000	72	72	144

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	59	62	61
	Girls	63	63	60
	Total	122	125	121
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (96)	87 (83)	84 (80)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	44 (48)	63 (60)	41 (46)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	63	59
	Girls	66	64	63
	Total	124	127	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (87)	88 (84)	85 (62)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	45 (65)	65 (63)	51 (38)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	57	61	118

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	43	55	56
	Girls	52	61	62
	Total	95	116	118
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	81 (82)	98 (98)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	52
	National	38.4

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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	2000	43	40	83

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	18.3	19.6	18.9	4.0	4.0	4.0
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	686
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	50.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	203

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.7
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	19.9
Sixth form	13.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999 - 2000
----------------	-------------

	£
Total income	2,352,100
Total expenditure	2,444,724
Expenditure per pupil	2,919
Balance brought forward from previous year	235,446
Balance carried forward to next year	143,822

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 55.1%

Number of questionnaires sent out	844
Number of questionnaires returned	465

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	40	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	32	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	52	9	1	1
The teaching is good.	57	40	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	49	9	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	32	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	19	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	51	10	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	65	33	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	32	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	48	6	1	3