

**OFSTED regrets that the recent inspection report on
Bishop Walsh Catholic School failed to reflect the
specialist status of the school as a Performing Arts College.**

INSPECTION REPORT

BISHOP WALSH CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Sutton Coldfield

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103536

Headteacher: Mr Michael A Moran

Reporting inspector: Dr R G Wallace
1050

Dates of inspection: 20-23 November 2000

Inspection number: 187852

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
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
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Dates of previous inspection:	29 April – 3 May 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bishop Walsh Catholic School is a Roman Catholic, voluntary-aided comprehensive school for boys and girls. At the time of the inspection there were 937 pupils, with 55 more boys than girls, and 184 pupils in the Sixth Form. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities. All but a very small number of pupils begin and end their compulsory secondary education at the school; there is little pupil mobility. The attainment of pupils when admitted to the school at the age of 11 has in recent years been well above average. The numbers of pupils with special educational needs and of those with statements of special educational needs are below average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bishop Walsh is a successful and popular school that is enabling its pupils, who arrive with attainment levels that are well above average overall, to maintain their progress and to achieve high results at GCSE. The most recent Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Test (SAT) results were well above the national average, although there were significant differences between the subjects. Much of the teaching is good, although there is some unsatisfactory teaching. The A Level results have improved but are still not as good as they should be. Most pupils are attentive, work well in lessons and behave well around the school. Attendance is good. The leadership of the school is being very effective in making the changes necessary to continue the school's improvement. The school is giving satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is well led by the headteacher, other staff and governors, with an emphasis on academic standards, routine self-evaluation and a high level of accountability by departments to the headteacher and governors.
- Standards are high overall and consistently high in English, history and German.
- The majority of the teaching in the school challenges the pupils, engages their interest, develops their basic skills well and enables them to make good progress.
- The majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well in lessons and are keen to make progress in their studies.
- The care and guidance procedures at the school are good.

What could be improved

- A Level results have improved since the last inspection and are close to the national average but are still not as good as they should be.
- Whilst more than a third of pupils achieved ten A*-C grades at GCSE in 2000, some of the ablest pupils are not making as much progress as they should, and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is currently unsatisfactory.
- Whilst the majority of teaching is satisfactory or better, there is a proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory.
- A small minority of pupils, mainly but not solely in Year 11 and in some lower sets in other years, have attitudes that are affecting the standards of their work and that of other pupils.
- Considerable improvements have been made in information and communication technology (ICT), but the pupils' skills at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form are still unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April/May 1996. Since then the results in Key Stage 3 SATs have remained about the same, generally above average until 2000 when there was a big improvement so that all SAT results were well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, whilst remaining well above the national average, was erratic until there was a big increase of 10% in 2000, producing the school's best ever GCSE results. The number of pupils entered for A Level has increased, and results were higher in 1999 than in 1996, falling back to below the national average in 2000. Attendance has remained well above the national average. The pupils' behaviour has remained mostly good. Overall, the school has made steady progress since the previous report.

After a difficult period during which the previous well-respected headteacher was very ill, the new headteacher has led the staff and governors in responding well to the points raised in the previous report. The school's objectives are clear. Planning to improve the school involves governors and teachers and is now good. Very thorough and effective monitoring of standards takes place. ICT, after a very poor record, is now improving, although not yet sufficiently. Standards in design and technology are improving. There has been a good response from some subjects, but little from others, to the need for pupils to have greater responsibility for their own learning. The health and safety matters raised in the previous report have been tackled. The school is in a strong position to tackle the few weaknesses that it still has.

STANDARDS

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

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

The Key Stage 3 SAT results in 2000 were well above the national average overall and in all three core subjects (English, mathematics and science). When compared with similar schools, the overall results were average. The 2000 results were an improvement on those of 1999 and similar to those of earlier years. Gender differences in attainment at all stages are erratic.

GCSE results in 2000 were the best in the school's history. The overall GCSE results have been well above average consistently in recent years and have been improving. The school was in the top quarter of schools nationally in 2000 for the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in five or more subjects. The best results were in English (both language and literature), history, art and music. The worst were in ICT, although these were a big improvement on those of 1999, reflecting progress in the school's performance.

A Level results, which have varied in recent years with no consistent pattern, have not been as impressive as those at GCSE. In 1997 and 1998 they were below the national average, rising to above the national average in 1999. The 2000 results were a little below the national average. Given the attainment of pupils on admission to the school and the high results achieved at GCSE, the A Level results are not as good as they should be. Within the overall results there were some big subject variations, with English, biology, history and German doing well. For the second year running a third of the candidates in mathematics failed.

The targets agreed with the local education authority have been very ambitious, representing major improvements on already high Key Stage 3 SATs and GCSE results. The targets were partially met in 2000.

Standards of literacy are high, with satisfactory standards even in some lower sets. Number skills are mostly good, with only a few pupils in lower sets not having sufficient command of these skills. Whilst ICT standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection, they are still not high enough and the school is not enabling older pupils to catch up work that they missed earlier in their careers at the school. In other subjects the standards are mostly well above average at Key Stage 3, but in some Year 11 classes the standards of current work do not match those of the most recent GCSE results. Most pupils are achieving well and making satisfactory progress, although teachers are not consistently enabling the ablest or the least able pupils to make appropriate progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils have good attitudes to school. In some Year 11 classes and in some lower sets in other years, a few pupils are undermining their own learning and that of others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils on the whole behave well, with only occasional lapses. Movement around the school at lesson changes is very difficult because of narrow corridors and staircases, but most pupils act sensibly.
Personal development and relationships	These are satisfactory overall. The general ethos of the school, the pastoral system and the personal, social and moral education programmes ensure that relationships are mostly good.
Attendance	Attendance is good, with good procedures to ensure regular attendance.

Whilst some subjects are allowing pupils to develop more independence and self-reliance in their learning, this is not yet always the practice.

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.

In a short inspection the selection of lessons is significantly affected by the days of the inspection. 90% of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better, with 46% that were well or very well taught, and 10% where there were weaknesses. English is generally taught well. The balance in the quality of mathematics teaching is towards the good, with some that is satisfactory, and a little in Year 9 that is unsatisfactory. Science teaching is mostly satisfactory with some that is good. The variations in other subjects are mainly due to individual teachers rather than their departments. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching, amounting to 17% of the lessons observed, was at Key Stage 3, but this was also the key stage where there was more of the good and very good teaching. The sample of the key stage in a short inspection was small, and the teaching at Key Stage 3 overall is judged to be satisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form is good overall.

Much of the teaching, notably in English, history, German, art and music, challenges the pupils. In most subjects lessons are well planned and organised, with opportunities for the pupils to consolidate their knowledge. The amount of independent learning varies considerably by subject. The weaknesses in teaching are mainly in the control of some pupils with unsatisfactory attitudes. In some lessons the tasks set were undemanding for abler pupils, with insufficient progress made as a consequence.

Although the pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy are good, there is little specific teaching of these skills outside English and mathematics and no school programmes to promote these skills in other subjects. Standards of literacy are being developed well in English lessons. The mathematics department is beginning to focus on the development of mental skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good overall. Good use is made of alternatives to GCSE and A Level, but there is inadequate coverage of ICT, and some timetable arrangements reduce learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is currently unsatisfactory. A new co-ordinator has now been appointed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes satisfactory provision overall for its pupils' personal development. Assemblies are effective and the ethos of the school is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. Guidance is good and there are very good facilities and procedures for the pupils' welfare.

The arrangements for ICT, although much improved since the previous inspection, still do not match the requirements of the National Curriculum and the school remains in breach of statutory requirements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led and managed. It runs smoothly. The school acknowledges and takes action on those aspects of its work that need improvement. The leadership has achieved considerable improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The chair of the governors has a good knowledge of the school, its strengths and aspects for development. A few required items are missing from the governors' annual reports and from the school prospectus.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is a high level of self-evaluation and accountability that are having a beneficial impact on standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used to support the school's aim to raise standards.

The main strength of the school's management is the emphasis on review and consequent action. This is a thinking school. It applies the principles of best value when seeking services and equipment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high proportion judge that their children are making good progress in a well-behaved school. They consider the school to be well managed. Parents consider the teaching to be good. They have a particular regard for the English, history and modern languages departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst appreciating some recent staff changes, some parents were concerned about their children's progress in science and mathematics. 20% of those responding to the questionnaire would like more information about their children's progress.

Inspectors generally endorse the parents' views. The reporting to parents about their children's progress is in line with usual practice in secondary schools. There are some grounds for concern about the progress made by some pupils, mainly the most able.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school is well led by the headteacher, other staff and governors, with an emphasis on academic standards, routine self-evaluation and a high level of accountability by departments to the headteacher and governors

1. The management of the school is strongly focused on achieving high standards. The current headteacher has made very good progress in building on the foundations of his predecessor to turn the school into one where accountability for standards and the responsibility of departments to raise standards are widely understood. There has been a considerable increase in the school's self-evaluation in the last two years, and the deputy head responsible for the curriculum is having a big impact in this development. The chair of governors is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and about aspects and subjects where improvements are needed. There is a good approach to evaluation, with subject departments clearly now used to analysing their results and looking for means to improve them. The level of monitoring is much higher than in most schools. Every year subject departments are expected to produce a rigorous assessment of their performance in SATs, at GCSE and at A Level. Departments also carry out self-reviews, involving an element of independent external assessment, in accordance with uniform procedures. Teaching is observed as part of the procedures. Departments present their reports to the governors. The strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of individuals are assessed and acknowledged as the spur to improvement. These approaches are having a beneficial effect on standards generally in the school. They continue to be developed.

Standards are high overall and consistently high in English, history and German

2. Standards are above average in the school as a whole and in several subjects at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. Within the overall good examination results and high standards observed in lessons, English, history and German have records of consistently enabling pupils to achieve well at these stages and also at A Level.

3. For the last four years the results in English in Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) have exceeded the national average for all schools and have mostly been well above average. When compared with the results of similar schools (those having a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals), the results have always at least matched the average and often exceeded it. At GCSE the pupils have achieved consistently high results in both English and English literature. The pupils do better in both of these subjects than they do in the average of all their other subjects. The pupils also made at least satisfactory progress from the levels assessed at the beginning of Year 10. There is a high level of entries for A Level in English. In 1999 15 of the 42 pupils achieved the highest grades of A and B, and all pupils passed. In 2000 7 of 33 entrants achieved these higher grades.

4. Standards of literacy are well above average. Many pupils are articulate speakers, using mostly standard English. Most listen attentively with good comprehension. They listen and respond well, for example, in art lessons where the pupils are challenged to explain and justify their designs, arguing their case. In A Level history they are expected and are willing to express judgements. Most pupils at all stages read fluently with at least satisfactory comprehension. All but a few pupils are able to read well enough to meet the demands of the curriculum. Research skills are developed well in English, geography and history; in these subjects the school has responded well to comments made in the previous report about insufficient development of these skills. They are now included in the English scheme of work, although not yet in those of all subjects. The standard of writing is good overall. When pupils are given the opportunity to write at length, as they are in English although insufficiently in many other subjects, their work is well organised.

5. History is a popular choice of pupils at both GCSE and A Level. At GCSE more than half the pupils take the subject each year. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades has been well above the national average, reaching 83% in 2000 compared with the national figure of 56.2%. Pupils taking history achieve a higher grade than the average of the grades in all their other subjects. In 2000, the history department enabled pupils to make the greatest progress of all subjects from that predicted on the basis of tests conducted at the beginning of Year 10. The numbers of pupils taking the subject at A Level have remained high, despite the attractions of other subjects. In 2000, all 18 entrants passed at A Level, eight of them with A or B grades.

6. History is a subject that has responded very well to the key issue in the previous inspection report that looked for greater independence in the pupils' learning, with a greater emphasis on enquiry and thinking. At Key Stage 3 pupils consider, in some classes with a high level of sophistication for their age, questions of reliability in evidence, the reasons for events, and the ideas and personalities that shape major developments. They learn to analyse, synthesise and make deductions. These are routine aspects of history lessons, matched by homework writing over several weeks to consolidate in individual studies the topics covered in class. At GCSE the same skills are developed with a proper emphasis on the requirements of the examination. Pupils taking the subject at A Level are able to handle their factual knowledge well to participate in a seminar approach. In one class, for example, they considered in groups the relationship between religious and political factors in the time leading to the Civil War in the seventeenth century, before making deductions as a class. These high standards are the result of good departmental organisation, effective teaching and committed pupils.

7. German is a strong subject at the school. It is taken by half the pupils in the year group at GCSE, with results in both 1999 and 2000 that were 13% above the national average. As with history, the pupils taking German achieve a higher grade in the subject than they do in the average of all the subjects that they take. The pupils also make satisfactory progress throughout Years 10 and 11 from their assessed attainment at the beginning of the key stage. The numbers taking the subject at A Level are low, but all seven candidates passed in 2000, with two pupils achieving the higher grades, and in 1999 one of the three candidates achieved an A grade.

8. High standards in German are being maintained as a result of consistently good teaching and the enthusiasm of the pupils for the subject. The teachers begin all lessons with a brief consolidation of recent learning and make the aims of the lessons clear. The pupils then work hard to ensure that the lessons' targets are achieved. All teaching of German is thoroughly prepared with an emphasis at key Stages 3 and 4 on good oral practice, valuable in itself, but also enabling pupils and teachers to see what is well understood and what needs to be reinforced. The pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations. The well-sequenced lessons enable the pupils to build up their knowledge of the language with confidence and success.

Much of the teaching in the school challenges the pupils, engages their interest, develops their basic and subject skills well and enables them to make good progress

9. A high proportion of teaching, almost a half, is good or very good. High expectations and challenging activities lead to high attainment in classes at all key stages. These were features of a Year 11 English class studying *Of Mice and Men*. The pupils had done their homework and were able to identify the main features of the story's characters, using good vocabulary. Pupils in a Year 9 mathematics class, when consolidating methods for making mental calculations, were given a range of techniques to consider, with more challenging demands made on the most able pupils. Year 13 pupils preparing for A Level music were given a challenging task that made demands on both their listening and composing skills.

10. Most lessons are well planned with a good structure to promote progress in a good working atmosphere. In a Year 9 ICT lesson, most pupils were working independently when using the Internet to plan a travel schedule, as a result of well-established routines. Another strong feature in some classes is the good knowledge that some teachers have of their pupils' individual learning needs. This was evident in a Year 13 art class, amongst others. Many teachers give good, immediate

assessments on how pupils are achieving, for example in a Year 10 music lesson where the teacher gave good feedback after listening to the pupils' compositions when working on film or television music. Questioning and answering techniques are used well, not only to recall and consolidate knowledge, but to require pupils to think. An example of this was in a Year 13 chemistry lesson, where the teacher used questioning to provide challenges that extended the work beyond the planned learning of the lesson.

11. A criticism of teaching at the time of the previous inspection was that the pupils were not allowed sufficiently to participate in their own learning. Several subjects have responded well to this point. In a Year 9 geography lesson using Israel as a case study on refugees, for example, the pupils were set enquiry tasks, with the teaching prompting the pupils to think with questions but not providing answers. Parents comment that enquiry homeworks are a good feature of learning at the school. Paired and other oral work is used well to promote this greater self-reliance by pupils, as in a Year 9 German lesson with the pupils practising phrases and sentences on the topic of arranging a meeting.

The majority of the pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well in lessons and are keen to make progress in their studies

12. The pupils are mostly well behaved when moving around the school. Corridors and particularly staircases are very narrow for the numbers of pupils at the school, and congestion is inevitable at lesson changes. Most pupils cope with this sensibly and patiently, without exploiting it as an excuse to misbehave or to arrive late for lessons. Behaviour in assemblies is excellent, with serious attitudes and attention to the themes. In lessons the majority of pupils are well behaved, attentive and keen to succeed. The attitudes of most pupils, coupled with the quality of teaching, are a main cause of the school's success. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils and pupils are, with just a few exceptions, good.

13. The pupils accept responsibilities, for example by participating in assemblies, running activities for charities, acting as form and sports captains and representing their forms on the school council and the catering committee. In lessons the pupils volunteer answers well and participate effectively in paired and group work. A large cross-section of pupils was able in a meeting with an inspector to give a balanced and frank set of views on many aspects of the school. They commented sensibly on the good ethos of the school, the adequacy of homework (mostly good, but sometimes 'finish off', and a variety in the promptness with which it is marked), behaviour (generally good, but not always so in some Year 11 classes) and the value of performing arts. They were clear in their view that the school had improved in the last two years. When expressing dissatisfaction or concerns (for example about the inadequacy of ICT equipment, stereotyping of pupils by some teachers, failures in the taxi arrangements for Sixth Formers involved in consortium classes at other schools and the Sixth Form dress code) they were sensible, calm and articulate. Only when commenting on the condition of the toilets did they become vehement, with good reason in the view of inspectors.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

A Level results have improved since the last inspection and are close to the national average but are still not as good as they should be

14. The very good GCSE results are not yet being followed by good enough A Level results. Until 1999 the school's average points score had been below the national average, matching the national average for the first time in 1999. It slipped a little below the national average again in 2000. All pupils at the school are entered for general studies and their results accounted for a quarter of all A Level pass grades.

15. The school's standard for admission to A Level courses is quite low and can be justified as giving marginal candidates a chance to make further progress, as some do, to reach acceptable A

Level grades. There is, however, no merit in a third of pupils taking a subject for two years and then failing, as was the case in mathematics in 1999 and 2000. There is a need for both a more realistic assessment of the pupils' chances of success at the outset of courses and more careful monitoring of their performance on the courses so that earlier intervention takes place. Sociology is expanding without a proven record. The current number of pupils beginning sociology is higher than in the past, yet only a total of five pupils have been entered in the last two years combined and three of those failed.

16. Within the overall attainment at A Level, there are some notable successes as well as weaknesses. In 2000 there were some A or B grades in all subjects except business studies, design and technology and physical education. In history, almost half of the 18 entrants achieved A or B grades. In British Government a third of the 11 entrants, and in biology a third of 15 entrants achieved the same results. Seven pupils achieved A or B grades in English. Two of the six entrants in chemistry and one of the four entrants in physics achieved A grades. The school is developing GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced courses, alongside GCE A Level, to widen its Sixth Form provision for pupils.

17. The very good analysis of GCSE results, with consequential action to raise standards, is beginning to be applied in the Sixth Form, but there is some way to go before the results at this level match the overall abilities of the pupils. The Sixth Form is undergoing change under new leadership and the school is taking action to improve results.

Whilst more than a third of pupils achieved ten A*-C grades at GCSE in 2000, some of the ablest pupils are not making as much progress as they should and the provision for pupils with special educational needs is currently unsatisfactory

18. The average attainment of pupils on admission to the school has been rising and was well above average in both 1999 and 2000. Even in earlier years the attainment of pupils arriving at the school in Year 7 was above average. An important statistic needs to be borne in mind: more than a quarter of the pupils in the current Year 10 who achieved well-above average Key Stage 3 SAT results in 1999 entered the school already having achieved at the age of 11 the Level 5 which is the expected level for most 14-year-olds. In the 2000 Key Stage 3 SATs, when the school's results are compared with similar schools, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 and higher is above average for English but below average for mathematics and science. At GCSE in 2000 there was a similar variation between the core subjects in the results at the higher levels: 17 A grades in English (two of them A*), 12 in mathematics (none starred) and 10 in science (none starred).

19. The English department is mostly taking the pupils forward from one stage to the next with appropriate progress. The mathematics department is now taking more account of the pupils' existing standards when they arrive in Year 7, appreciating the greater solidity of their knowledge as a result of changes in the primary school curriculum following the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Science teachers do not have sufficiently close links with the main primary schools from which Bishop Walsh's pupils come to be clear about the standards of higher-attaining pupils, so that these are insufficiently challenged and not moved forward enough from their arrival at the school.

20. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Present staffing arrangements are temporary. Since the inspection the school has appointed a new, permanent special educational needs co-ordinator. There is a considerable body of work to be undertaken, involving better assessment, informing class teachers how best to support these pupils, deploying resources more effectively and tackling some unsatisfactory behaviour in lower sets.

Whilst the majority of teaching is satisfactory or better, some teaching is unsatisfactory

21. 10% of the lessons seen were taught unsatisfactorily. One lesson was simply mistimed by a teacher who taught a very good lesson on another occasion and this was of little significance for the

future. The other weaknesses were in the inadequacy of the progress made by the pupils during a 35-minute period of learning. These were sometimes the consequence of inadequate content, for example insufficient use of French and inadequate progress by pupils in a French lesson, and too slow a coverage of theories, with some carelessness in examples, in a sociology lesson. Four of the unsatisfactory lessons were taught by teachers with an inadequate grip on their classes, so that quite well-planned lessons did not succeed. Guidance from the school's behaviour co-ordinator and monitoring by heads of departments are keeping the weaknesses in check, but some problems remain to be tackled.

A minority of pupils, mainly in Year 11 but also in some lower sets in other years, have attitudes that are affecting the standards of their work and that of other pupils

22. Whilst the overall behaviour of pupils in lessons and their attitudes to learning are good and in many classes exemplary, there are some classes where the attitudes and sometimes the behaviour of some pupils prevent their learning and affect the progress of more serious pupils in the class. This was the case in several Year 11 lessons seen during the inspection. Some of these were higher sets. There were also a very few classes in other years, mainly in lower sets, where some very bad behaviour was seen and little progress was made by any pupils. In those cases the weaknesses were primarily in teaching, although those weaknesses did reveal some potentially very unpleasant attitudes that need to be tackled. The high levels of monitoring and accountability, which are strong features of the school, and the considerable number of fixed-term exclusions in the last year have not overcome these weaknesses. The school has put procedures in place to reduce the Year 11 problem, including the provision of learning mentors and guidance from the Catholic support centre. Without further prompt action the problems in Year 11 are likely to be reflected in the 2001 GCSE results.

Considerable improvements have been made in information and communication technology (ICT), but the pupils' skills at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form are unsatisfactory

23. There were weaknesses in ICT at the time of the last OFSTED report. Improvements have been made. There are now specific lessons in ICT to develop the pupils' basic skills, but these are provided only for Years 7-9 with a little at Key Stage 4. The school is not taking sufficient action to help pupils in Years 10 and 11 to catch up with work that they could not have covered earlier in their careers at the school; indeed, the present allocation of time at Key Stage 4 would be insufficient even if these pupils had had the benefit of comprehensive ICT learning earlier. Just over a third of Year 10 and 11 pupils take a specific ICT course, but their skills are still weak because of what they missed earlier. The pupils taking ICT as a GCSE short course in 2000 did not do as well as they did in other subjects, but they did very much better than the 1999 pupils, none of whom achieved an A*-C grade. This evidence of progress from 1999 to 2000, as a result of changes already made, indicates what is possible if the curriculum arrangements and the access to equipment are improved.

24. There is insufficient equipment in the school to allow for adequate teaching of ICT skills or for the use of ICT in subject lessons. The intention to open another ICT room in the next few weeks will not alone increase sufficiently the access that the pupils have to ICT. The appointment of an ICT technician is planned and this is an essential development. In part because of past practice and in part because of the inadequacy of present equipment, the school cannot guarantee compliance for all pupils with the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.

25. ICT skills are not routinely used in subjects, as required by the National Curriculum. They are assessed only on the basis of work in ICT lessons.

26. The school has made progress on which it can build, but there is still much to be done, not least enabling pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form whose skills are inadequate as a result of their experience earlier in the school, to catch up.

The care and guidance procedures at the school are good

27. Parents rightly speak warmly about the quality of personal guidance and individual support for pupils provided by the school. Its pastoral arrangements are strong. The pupils, when given the opportunity to say what is best about the school (as well as what they would change) agree that the school has a good, supportive ethos.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. The school is in a strong position to tackle the few weaknesses that it still has. Whilst maintaining its many strengths, the school should now concentrate on:

- (1) improving GCE A Level results by:
 - relating entrance requirements more closely to the minimum standard needed for potential success
 - reviewing rigorously after one term those pupils who need to demonstrate rapid progress at the start of the course to ensure ultimate success
 - developing the existing alternatives to GCE A Level such as GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Level;
- (2) enabling both the higher and the lower-attaining pupils to make appropriate progress by:
 - developing the programme for gifted pupils
 - ensuring that teaching is correctly pitched to enable the wider band of able pupils to make sufficient progress in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3, as they already do in some other subjects
 - making a good appointment to lead provision for pupils with special educational needs as the first step in improving provision for these pupils
 - assessing more specifically the nature of the pupils' special needs
 - deploying support staff more efficiently in order to assist these pupils;
- (3) reducing unsatisfactory teaching by:
 - providing support and guidance to the teachers who need them
 - taking the further steps that may be necessary in order to ensure that pupils always have the quality of teaching that will enable them to make progress;
- (4) improving the attitudes to learning, as needed in a few classes, by:
 - taking firm action in a few Year 11 classes to protect the interests of those who wish to learn, whilst continuing to use existing guidance procedures
 - tackling the weaknesses in teaching that are resulting in a very small number of classes in other years developing attitudes that prevent effective learning and may cause unsatisfactory attitudes by pupils to become entrenched;
- (5) raising the pupils' skill levels in ICT by:
 - acquiring substantially more computers
 - providing tuition to older pupils that will enable them to catch up with the poor provision at the school earlier in their careers
 - implementing the plan to appoint ICT technical support

- checking all subject schemes of work to ensure that adequate subject use of ICT is planned, and then monitoring to confirm that it is taking place.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	90
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13	34	43	8	2	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	753	184
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	37	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth Form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	88	64	152

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	63	74	68
	Girls	55	56	52
	Total	118	130	120
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (76)	85 (76)	80 (60)
	National	64 (63)	66(62)	62 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	50 (33)	56 (41)	44 (18)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	75	74	54
	Girls	60	56	51
	Total	135	130	105
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	89 (84)	86 (76)	69 (68)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	68 (51)	55 (42)	36 (28)
	National	31 (31)	39 37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	68	73	141

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	45	68	68
	Girls	56	71	72
	Total	101	139	140
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	72 (61)	99 (98)	99 (99)
	National	49 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (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	47.1 (47)
	National	38.7 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	18	50%
	National		N/a

Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	29	36	65

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	16.3	18.1	17.3 (18)	1.3	0	1.3 (4)
National	N/a	N/a	N/a (17.9)	N/a	N/a	N/a (2.8)

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	10	100%
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	
Indian	2
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	918
Any other minority ethnic group	8

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	19	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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)	59.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	319

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.2
Key Stage 4	20.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,288,510
Total expenditure	2,337,850
Expenditure per pupil	2,558
Balance brought forward from previous year	118,732
Balance carried forward to next year	69,392

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	937
Number of questionnaires returned	204

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	48	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	47	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	46	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	55	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	42	53	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	49	19	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	39	1	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	51	16	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	54	42	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	43	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	44	7	2	4

Other issues raised by parents

Parents judged that the school had improved in the last two years. Several parents expressed concern about attitudes and behaviour in some Year 11 classes.