

INSPECTION REPORT

**CARDINAL HEENAN CATHOLIC HIGH
SCHOOL**

Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104714

Headteacher: Mr J Burke

Reporting inspector: Mr T W M Comer
15109

Dates of inspection: 26-30 March 2001

Inspection number: 187977

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Boys 11-16, mixed in the sixth form
School address:	Honeysgreen Lane West Derby Liverpool Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Angwin
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

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11457	Mrs J Beattie	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works with parents
15678	Mrs J Radford	Team Inspector	Special educational needs	
11975	Mrs T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	Standards achieved by pupils
12003	Dr A Marfleet	Team Inspector	English	
10308	Mr J Paddick	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
2644	Mr M McLeod	Team Inspector	Science	
17556	Mr M Miller	Team Inspector	Art and design Information technology	
11966	Mr J Clay	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
19452	Mr A Pearson	Team Inspector	History	
12118	Mr A Paver	Team Inspector	Geography	
23709	Mrs A Powell	Team Inspector	Modern languages	
27803	Mr J Clark	Team inspector	Physical education	The curriculum
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cardinal Heenan High School is a large Roman Catholic comprehensive school for boys which educates 1343 pupils in the 11-18 age range, including 169 students in the sixth form, 10 of whom are girls. The school is popular and oversubscribed. The school is situated in north-east Liverpool close to areas of considerable economic hardship and social disadvantage although it draws its pupils from a wide area covering the City of Liverpool and beyond. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The attainment of the annual intake of pupils to Year 7 is below average. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs is above average though the proportion with formal statements is average. A small proportion of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds; although six of them have English as an additional language, none is at an early stage of learning English.

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

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school. The leadership is strong and is successfully concentrating on improving teaching and raising standards. The teaching is good and the pupils therefore make good progress and achieve well though there is still room for further improvement. The school is efficient, including the sixth form, and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is very well led and is well managed.
- The teaching is good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The strongest subjects at GCSE are English literature, art and design, modern languages and business studies.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to school and their work.
- The school looks after its pupils very well and has a very good partnership with parents.

What could be improved

- The curriculum for Years 7-11
- Standards in mathematics in Years 7-11
- The teaching and standards in design and technology
- The management of design and technology
- The marking of pupils' written work

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the previous inspection in April, 1996, the school has improved very well and has received a national award to mark its improvement. GCSE examination results have improved at a much faster rate than the national picture. Teaching has substantially improved, especially in art, modern languages and physical education, and it is improving rapidly in information and communication technology. The school has made good overall progress with the issues set for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. In particular, attendance has substantially improved, the sixth form curriculum is broader and the procedures for monitoring lessons have resulted in better teaching and higher standards. The difficulties in meeting new National Curriculum requirements for modern languages and design and technology in Years 10 and 11, reported in 1996, have still not been resolved.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	B
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	D	

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

National test results and achievements of Year 9 pupils

Over the four-year period 1996-2000, the results of national tests for pupils aged 14 were below average but improved at a similar rate to the national trend. In 2000, the results were below the national averages in each of the three main subjects English, mathematics and science. However, when compared with those of similar schools, the overall results were above average.

The standards of work of the present Year 9 pupils are close to average and the pupils achieve well in relation to their below average starting points at the beginning of Year 7. Standards are average in English and science and pupils are achieving well though they are below average in mathematics. Pupils generally achieve their highest standards in modern languages, and in art and design. In design and technology, pupils are underachieving because design skills are not taught well enough.

GCSE results and achievements of Year 11 pupils

The GCSE results were below average but improved rapidly over the four-year period 1996-2000. In 2000, the results were above the average for similar schools and the governors' targets were achieved, though the results were still below the national average. The highest GCSE results in 2000 were in English literature, art and design, business studies, and modern languages.

The standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are broadly average for their age. Standards are average in English and science though they are below average in mathematics. Overall, the pupils achieve well.

A-level results and achievements of the sixth form students

The A-level results are below average and have been so for the past four years though they have improved. In 2000, a number of students did not pass their A-level examinations in mathematics, design and technology, and history because the courses were too difficult for them. The school's criteria for entry to sixth-form courses is now more rigorous. The current Year 13 students' standards of work are average overall and represent good achievement. Year 12 students' standards of work in the new AS courses, and in vocational (GNVQ) courses, are satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and try hard. Their very good attitudes are an important reason for their good progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Exclusion rates are below average.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. The school deals effectively with instances of bullying.
Attendance	Above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good throughout the school and meets the needs of the pupils of the full range of attainment well. All pupils therefore learn well and make good progress, including those with special educational needs. 177 lessons were observed during the inspection. Of these, 28 per cent were very good or excellent, a further 50 per cent were good, another 20 per cent were satisfactory and one per cent was unsatisfactory.

Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught. The teaching and learning of English and science are good throughout the school. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory in the main school and is good in the sixth form but the pace of pupils' learning in some classes is too slow and there are also some weaknesses in lesson planning. The teaching of design is unsatisfactory in design and technology in Years 7-9.

The good quality of the teaching is the principal reason for pupils' good achievement. The main strengths of the teaching are the teachers' good command of their subjects, their effective planning of lessons for all pupils, their good discipline and management of their classes. The main weakness is an inconsistency in the marking of written work.

Pupils with special gifts and talents in sport achieve high standards. They are identified from Year 7 onwards and achieve much success, often at regional, national and international levels.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	In the main school, the curriculum does not meet legal requirements for modern languages and design and technology. The curriculum is very good in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. The quality of the learning support is good. Individual education plans give a clear picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses but short-term targets sometimes lack the precision necessary for accurate measurement of progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The leadership places spiritual development at the heart of the school's work. Moral, social and cultural development are also good. Pupils' personal qualities are well developed.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strength of the school. Underachievers are quickly identified and action taken. The pupils' welfare and guidance are very well managed. The school has a very effective partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school benefits from the headteacher's very good and effective leadership. The senior staff have established an effective climate for learning. The school is well managed overall but the management of design and technology is unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	All legal requirements are met except for the curriculum. Governors' work in financial management is very effective. Governors know the school and its strengths and weaknesses well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school uses assessment data to compare its performance with that of other schools. A system of performance management of teachers is in place. The quality of teaching and learning is rigorously monitored and developed through first hand observation of lessons.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are adequate for most subjects though there are shortages of texts for design and technology, and modern languages. There are insufficient computers for music and for some other subjects. The accommodation for music is inadequate and adversely affects pupils' progress. When making purchases or placing contracts the school always achieves best value. The sixth form is cost effective.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children make good progress • The teaching is good • They are well informed about progress • The school is approachable. • Expectations are high. • Their children are becoming mature and responsible • The partnership with the school is strong. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minority of parents think their children should have more homework.

The inspectors agree with nearly all of the parents' positive views though they think that pupils' progress reports could be improved. The inspectors find that the setting of homework is generally sufficient and helps to consolidate the pupils' learning; nevertheless, there is some inconsistency in setting it.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall attainment of the annual intake of pupils to Year 7 is below average as indicated at the age of 11 by reliable tests of reading and cognitive ability. Literacy skills are particularly weak.
2. The results of national tests in English, mathematics and science for the previous Year 9 pupils in 2000 were below the national average, but were above average in comparison with those of similar schools. The results were below average in each of the three subjects. Over the four-year period 1996-2000, the overall results improved in line with the national trend. Over this period, the results in English were the highest of the three subjects and were above the national average for boys. The results were lowest in mathematics.
3. Standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are average overall and represent a good achievement for these boys in relation to their starting points in Year 7. Standards are average in English and science and below average in mathematics. In other subjects, standards are above average in art and design and in modern languages, and they are average in geography, history, music and physical education. Standards are below average in information and communications technology (ICT) and are well below average in design and technology. Pupils are underachieving in design and technology because design skills are not taught properly.
4. The GCSE results of the previous Year 11 pupils in 2000 were below the national average overall but were above average for similar schools and met the targets set by the governors. Over the past five years, the results have increased at a much faster rate than the national trend. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in five or more subjects is now below but close to the national average, and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more subjects at grades A*-G is just above the national average. The results were broadly in line with the national average for boys in English, mathematics and science subjects. The results were well above average in English literature and business studies. They were above average in art and Spanish. They were below average in information technology and well below average in design and technology. Only a minority of the pupils take GCSE in modern languages, and a large minority do not take the examination in English literature and a minority of boys take GCSE in design and technology.
5. Standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are average overall and are improving. The pupils are achieving well overall. Standards are average in English and science but below average in mathematics. Standards are above average in art and modern languages. Standards are average in geography, history and physical education. Standards are below average in music and in ICT. In design and technology, standards are well below average because of pupils' unsatisfactory background and experience of design, and also because the pupils taking the subject tend to be lower attainers.
6. The A-level results, as measured by the students' average points score, were below the national average in 2000, and over the past three years the average score has been well below the national average though it is rising. In English Literature all students entered for the examination passed. In mathematics several students gained high grades but around half of the candidates failed because the course was too difficult for them or they were otherwise unsuited to study at this level. This was also the case in history. In design and technology most students failed and the decision has been taken to discontinue the A-level course in this subject.
7. The standards of work of the present Year 13 students are average overall. Students achieve well overall and there is no underachievement. Standards are above average in mathematics, and average in English literature and science subjects. Standards are above average in art, geography and modern foreign languages. They are average in history, physical education and music. Standards are below average in design and technology.
8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the overall targets set for them in their individual education plans, and usually attain the standards which their teachers expect of them. In

2000, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more subject passes at GCSE was a little above the national average and this indicates that lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs succeed in their examinations. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. For example, in the Year 10 GNVQ course, pupils with special educational needs have been successful in the first part of the modular examination. The school identifies pupils with special talents in physical activities, such as football, and these pupils make good progress and achieve much success, often at regional, national and international levels.

Key skills – literacy and numeracy

9. The reading ages of boys entering the school in Year 7 are below their chronological age of 11 but literacy improves throughout the school and is satisfactory by Year 9. In all subjects, pupils increase their confidence in their literacy skills and the implementation of the school's literacy policy is effective.

10. The pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory. Currently, pupils have sufficient numerical competence to apply their skills and knowledge effectively in other subjects, such as geography and science.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.

11. Pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are very good and are a significant reason for their good progress. Pupils are enthusiastic about their studies, they take pride in the presentation of their work and are keen to show their achievements to visitors. They work at a good pace and are generally very keen to achieve their best. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities provided. Many of them supplement their classwork with extended studies before school, at lunchtime and after school.

12. Behaviour is good, overall. Pupils know the school's codes and expectations of good behaviour and the large majority responds well. Throughout the school, teachers and support staff are alert to any lapses in conduct and intervene quickly, often in consultation with parents, so that good standards of behaviour are maintained. During the previous school year, three pupils were permanently excluded and thirty-eight pupils were excluded for a fixed term. Following exclusion, pupils are well supervised when they re-join the school community so that it is unusual for them to be excluded more than once.

13. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is generally good. Pupils are appreciative of the support they receive from teachers, classroom assistants and fellow pupils. This support helps them to make good progress in adjusting to classroom routines, developing self-confidence and establishing constructive relationships.

14. Pupils' work is used very effectively in displays to illustrate their studies in a number of subjects. Pupils show a strong sense of ownership and pride in their school, they value the school's resources and the displays of their work. In response to the school uniform policy, pupils are neat and smart and sixth formers are appropriately dressed.

15. Relationships between pupils are good. The school's procedures to combat bullying are effective and no racist incidents have been reported. When incidents of aggressive behaviour occur, pupils generally report them. The school has undertaken a survey of pupils' experiences about verbal and physical bullying and this information has been used to investigate particular cases.

16. Pupils' personal qualities are developed well. Pupils' capacity to bear responsibility is fostered in many ways; for example, pupils from Years 9, 10 and 11 have trained as counsellors to help others worried about bullying, work or examination stress, and help Year 7 pupils settle into school. Every year group is represented on the school council which, together with the sixth-form committee, makes a good contribution to the running of the school; for example, the breakfast club, the one way system in corridors, procedures to prevent bullying and the organisation of the school day have been strongly influenced by the pupils' own decisions. Pupils take advantage of the range of extra-curricular activities and of many opportunities for day and residential trips, including trips abroad, to enrich their experiences. In physical education, pupils develop skills of teamwork and a sense of fair play. As part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme pupils have worked as classroom assistants in primary schools. Members of the sixth

form help with extra-curricular games and act as coaches, referees and umpires.

17. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The overall attendance figure for the last school year is above the national average. As at the time of the previous inspection, Year 11 has the lowest attendance level, but this has improved to more than 90 per cent in the current year. The large majority of pupils arrive for their lessons on time but a significant number are late in the morning, missing an important time with their form tutor and occasionally disrupting the start of their first lesson.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. Overall, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils well and it is good throughout the school. The quality of teaching and of learning are closely linked and there is little variation throughout the school. Lessons are well planned and interesting and motivate the pupils to learn. In 99 per cent of the 177 lessons observed during the inspection, teaching and learning were at least satisfactory. In more detail, 28 per cent of lessons were very good or excellent, a further 50 per cent were good, and a further 20 per cent were satisfactory. The high quality of the teaching is a strength of the school and is the principal reason for the pupils' good achievement.

19. Teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection. It has improved in most subjects but especially in physical education, art and design, and modern languages. In art and design, the teaching of three-dimensional work, a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, has improved and is now a strength of the subject. In physical education lessons, the requirement for pupils to observe each other's performance and analyse and comment on what is good technique and apply this knowledge to their own performance was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection but is now part of all lessons. The teaching of modern languages is a strength of the school. Staff as a whole are now much more aware than they were of the different ways in which pupils' individual needs can be identified and met effectively.

20. The teaching is good in English and science throughout the school. It is satisfactory in mathematics in Years 7 – 11 and good in the sixth form. English teaching is professional and successful. Science lessons are taught vigorously and the teachers are constantly thinking of new ways to interest their pupils and teach more effectively and the teaching of investigative science is a good feature. The best mathematics lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and much is expected of the pupils. Though pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in mathematics, there are some lessons in which pupils could make better progress when teachers speak for too long and pupils lose concentration and become restless. Sometimes there is insufficient urgency or pace and expectations are unclear.

21. In Years 7 to 11, teaching is very good in French, Spanish and music. It is good in art and design, geography, history and physical education. In design and technology, the teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9 because design skills are not taught properly, but it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. In the sixth form, teaching is very good in geography, modern languages and physical education. Teaching is good in all other subjects except design and technology, in which it is satisfactory.

22. The teaching of design and technology was satisfactory in the lessons seen during the inspection but the pupils' folders of work show that teachers do not have high enough expectations of what the pupils should achieve in their design work and that they do not teach the solving of design problems well enough. Worksheets are used indiscriminately and the higher attaining pupils are not extended. Nevertheless, some improvements are being made, such as new schemes of work and ensuring that lessons are properly summarised at the end. The good relationships with pupils, effective demonstration and teaching of manufacture, and the thorough individual help given to pupils are good features. Pupils respond well and are enthusiastic about working with food, and come in at lunchtimes to prepare for a lesson and stay after school to extend it.

23. The main strengths of the teaching throughout the school are the teachers' good knowledge of the subjects they teach, good relationships with the pupils and their consistently good discipline, and their effective planning of lessons. The weakness lies in the inconsistency of the marking of pupils' written work.

24. English teachers prepare pupils well for tests and examinations and they use their mastery of the set texts to good effect. Good subject knowledge is evident in mathematics lessons for A-level classes. In science, teachers' confident subject knowledge helps to ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them so that they make good progress, especially in scientific enquiry and investigation. The teaching of art and design encourages pupils *to become artists*, and develops key artwork skills. Pupils benefit from the wide range of expertise of the music staff. Teaching of physical education is characterised by very good subject knowledge that inspires pupils' confidence.

25. Because relationships are good and discipline is effective, pupils enjoy lessons, work hard and achieve well. The science teachers' generous use of praise when deserved has the effect of raising pupils' esteem and encouraging them to persevere with their work. In history, pupils know that their contributions to lessons are valued by their teachers and this also raises self-esteem and builds confidence. In physical education, management of pupils is sensitive but firm and pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them so that lessons progress at a good rate and no time is wasted. In modern languages, teachers manage pupils very well and give frequent praise.

26. Lessons are well planned, varied and interesting so that pupils are well motivated. The English teachers make lessons interesting through a variety of innovative and successful teaching methods, which result in good learning. The mathematics teachers carefully check pupils' understanding of previous work before introducing more difficult ideas. Pupils therefore understand what they are learning and the progress they make. Science, lessons are varied, interesting and linked well to real-life situations; for example, in a lesson about resuscitation, the techniques were carefully related to the scientific principles involved. In geography, the teachers are highly innovative, and are developing pupils' thinking skills. The geography teachers have developed a distinctive style which is all their own and they make very effective use of simple resources, such as overhead projectors, to illustrate points and well-chosen video clips punctuate lessons at appropriate points and capture the boys' interest and imagination. In history, well-chosen resources are adapted to ensure that all pupils can make good progress. The planning for progression is a major strength of the teaching in modern languages. Recordings and articles from the foreign press are used to very good effect. For example, French newspaper reports of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease introduced A-level students to new vocabulary, which helped to prepare them well for a written assignment.

27. The day-to-day assessment in lessons and the marking of written work are inconsistent, both within and between subjects. English teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and their questioning of them not only stimulates their thinking but shows clearly what is being learnt. The marking of work in mathematics is usually good, and explains clearly what pupils should do to improve; however, in some classes much work goes uncorrected. The marking is good in history because the teachers' detailed comments show pupils how to improve their work. Marking is inconsistent in science; although investigations are marked to an agreed system, homework and classwork are not marked consistently or rigorously enough which leads to some unsatisfactory presentation of work. In geography, marking is thorough but does not show pupils clearly enough how to improve their work. Modern languages marking is regular but needs more rigour to ensure errors are not missed. In physical education, the teachers do not always demonstrate clearly the standard expected of pupils.

28. The teaching of literacy is good overall and there is much good practice across the subjects of the curriculum. Teachers make effective use of key words displayed in the classroom when they refer to them and incorporate them in the lesson. They consistently and effectively make use of 'writing frames' as a means to improve the structure of pupils' extended writing and this is particularly well done in science and geography lessons. In many lessons, especially in history and modern languages, teachers correct faults in spellings and sentence structure very effectively. Though many boys are not inclined to read for pleasure in their own time, this is encouraged and extended in form-time.

29. The teaching of numeracy is also good. Although the teaching of numeracy is still developing, teachers understand pupils' competence and plan their lessons accordingly to apply, extend and practise the pupils' skills. The school is building on the effective work in numeracy done recently in primary school, and is extending it across the curriculum. Many mathematics lessons begin with short exercises to improve pupils' confidence with mental arithmetic and this is effective. Teachers in all other subjects have been involved in a survey to chart the use of mathematics in their work.

30. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught in mainstream lessons and in their withdrawal groups. Teachers are experienced in meeting pupils' different needs and plan their lessons carefully to ensure that all pupils make good progress. They have a good knowledge of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses and adapt their teaching styles to pupils' needs; for example, in a Year 7 lower set mathematics lesson pupils made very good progress because new work on long multiplication was introduced in small and manageable steps. Teachers and support staff work together very effectively. Learning support assistants are well prepared for lessons and play an important part in them, particularly in mathematics. Specialist teaching provided by the local support services is very effective. Pupils with aptitudes for physical activities are identified by the teachers who ensure that these pupils make good progress.

31. Homework is relevant to what pupils are doing in lessons and consolidates knowledge and skills. There is some inconsistency, however. It is set regularly in English and is sufficient. In mathematics, some teachers set insufficient homework to ensure that pupils consolidate the work done in class. Homework is set regularly in science but there is some lack of consistency in its quantity and its difficulty. In geography, homework is set, marked and quickly returned and extended research homework provides well for pupils to develop independent learning habits. In history, homework is regularly set and used to extend and consolidate pupils' learning.

32. The teaching of ICT is improving rapidly. In ICT lessons, teachers' good professional knowledge and understanding are concentrating effectively on improving key information technology skills in order to raise standards. These skills are becoming more firmly established, for example, in the use of presentation applications in Years 7 and 9. This leads to rapid progress in learning, which is applied and linked to other subjects, for example in history, in which a presentation was being prepared on the First World War. The teachers do not yet exploit the pupils' skills sufficiently in science. The use of spreadsheets is beginning to be used effectively in geography and word processing skills in English to enhance the presentation of written work and the pupils' drafting skills. Older pupils are starting to appreciate the value of using more sophisticated and professional software, for example in GNVQ coursework on image manipulation. Teaching of the subject is increasingly gaining the pupils' confidence because it provides good individual support for them individually, and also encourages them to develop independent learning skills.

33. Around forty pupils have instrumental lessons taught by a team of five visiting teachers. The quality of this teaching is good but the length of lessons, generally taught to small groups, is too short to allow pupils to make fast progress.

34. Teachers give generously of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially team games, sports and other outdoor activities. The sixth-form jazz group is highly accomplished and is popular both in school and on its frequent performances in the local area and beyond, providing good experience for the school's gifted and talented musicians.

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

35. The school is successfully implementing the changes brought about by the new National Curriculum and the introduction of AS level courses. Since the previous inspection, teaching time has increased and is now at the nationally recommended level. However, the curriculum for Years 7 – 11 is unsatisfactory because it does not meet statutory requirements.

36. As at the time of the previous inspection, approximately 60 lower attaining Year 7 pupils have extra literacy lessons instead of the modern languages lessons experienced by other pupils. Some Year 9 pupils have no music lessons.

37. Four-fifths of Year 10 and 11 pupils do not study a modern language and almost one half of them do not take a course in design and technology. Both of these matters represent statutory breaches. The higher attaining two-thirds of pupils take a GCSE in English literature in addition to English but the lower attaining pupils have no opportunity to do so.

38. The sixth-form curriculum is very good and provides a broad range of AS and A-level courses and a good range of vocational courses leading to GNVQ Advanced. All Year 12 students follow a key skills course. Provision includes generally gives students good opportunities for study of science and mathematics.

39. The curriculum for pupils on the special educational needs register is similar to that for other pupils. Smaller than average class sizes for lower attaining pupils, and the good quality of the classroom support, are positive features in the provision for these pupils. Withdrawal lessons give them the opportunity to improve their basic skills and to develop their self-confidence through small group and individual tuition. The summer school offers good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills before they begin Year 7. Individual education plans are effective in ensuring that pupils' particular needs are identified and provided for, but short-term targets are not always sufficiently precise. Pupils successfully take GCSE and other examinations.

40. The school provides a well-planned programme of personal, health and social education (PHSE) that includes sex and drugs education. Careers education is also part of the PSHE programme and is effective: all pupils from Years 9 to 13 have weekly lessons and a careers advisor is available in school for half a day each week.

41. Work-related education is a good feature. All pupils have two weeks' work experience and there are individual work placements throughout Years 10 to 13. In collaboration with colleges of further education, provision is made for selected pupils who would benefit, to spend part of the week in a local college, and part in school, working towards qualifications such as NVQ.

42. The school maintains productive links with local sports clubs and business organisations and sixth-form students work in local primary schools and in community projects. An adult education programme of evening classes also provides opportunities for sixth-form students to re-sit GCSE examinations to improve their grades.

43. The provision for extra-curricular activities, including music and drama, is very good and confirms the views of parents as expressed at the pre-inspection parents' meeting. Sport is particularly well provided for and during the week of the inspection more than three hundred pupils were involved in eight different sporting activities. There are after school revision clubs in a number of subjects, and a GNVQ course in information technology, with an uptake of more than 100 pupils, takes place after school hours.

44. The spiritual development of the boys is good. The whole community of the school has been involved in the rewriting of the mission statement and aims of the school. Spiritual development has been placed at the very centre of the school's purpose. A lay chaplain has been appointed and assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to take part in collective worship. The school meets its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Art and design, music, English, geography and history lessons all make effective contributions to the development of pupils' spirituality.

45. The moral development of the pupils is good. Gospel values underpin the example offered by teachers and the boys are taught the difference between right and wrong. Pupils express the strength of their commitment to others through Christian action and have raised substantial funds in the last eighteen months for charity.

46. The social education of the pupils is effective and pupils' social development is fostered and monitored in lessons; for example, in structured discussion in pairs and groups. In music lessons, pupils are expected to collaborate and perform frequently in public. Pupils with special educational needs also have good opportunities for involvement in activities which develop their social skills, such as class and group discussions in lessons and at the lunchtime reading club.

47. Cultural education is good and many pupils take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school. Annual dramatic productions are popular and well supported. Relatively small numbers take part in musical productions but the performances are popular and well attended. Several subjects make valuable contributions to cultural development, and visits regionally and abroad do much to broaden the pupils' experience.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare include regular consultations with, and support from, the educational welfare officer, the school health service and the educational psychologist. The 1996 inspection identified the need for a full assessment of health and safety risks. In response, the school commissioned an independent safety assessment throughout the premises. The recommendations are being carried out systematically though there is still a need for more staff training and for updating risk assessments. All accidents are recorded and the school has sufficient staff trained to administer first aid.

49. The school has very good assessment procedures, which provide a wealth of data and enable pastoral staff to monitor and support pupils' academic progress very effectively. Assessments made in Year 7 provide a basis for prediction for future achievement and appropriate targets in terms of National Curriculum levels and examination grades. Sixth-form students' work is monitored monthly and parents are informed of their progress. The targets are well understood by pupils and help to motivate them. The normal timetable is suspended to provide an action-planning day during the year in which pupils, parents and teachers come together to evaluate progress and to help set future targets. Monitoring of progress has been strengthened with the use of 'learning mentors' whose work is excellent.

50. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also monitored effectively. Strong links with local primary school enable these pupils to be identified early. Long-term targets for these pupils are appropriate and help pupils to make progress, but short-term targets in pupils' individual education plans are sometimes too vague to be measurable, particularly those contributed by pupils themselves. The quality of the learning support is very good; learning support assistants have a strong commitment to the wellbeing of their pupils and they develop stable relationships, which give pupils the confidence to respond positively to new challenges.

51. Measures to promote good attendance and behaviour are highly effective. The educational welfare officer works closely with the learning mentors, taking work to pupils' homes when necessary. Monitoring of registers identifies unsatisfactory attendance which is quickly followed up. Careful supervision at lunchtime makes sure that pupils, other than sixth formers, stay on site.

52. Measures to promote good behaviour and eliminate oppressive behaviour are very good. All pupils have copies of the school rules and the anti-bullying charter in their achievement planners. Pupils know that breaches of the rules result in sanctions and that their parents will be involved if necessary. Good behaviour and attitudes to work are recognised and rewarded with merits and certificates of commendation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. The school places a high priority on effective partnership with parents, which has a positive impact on pupils' education and well-being.

54. The contribution of the Parents' and Teachers' Association (PTA) is outstandingly good. The PTA helps to place the school at the heart of the community and raises a very substantial contribution to supplement the school's learning resources. The school's links with parents are highly effective. Every half-term, newsletters keep families fully informed of events on the school calendar, and provide news of pupils' work. The Chaplain reports on issues fundamental to the school's Christian mission, purpose and the pupils' spiritual growth. Parents are reminded of their part in helping their children to prepare for examinations and are informed of the school's parents' evenings, which provide them with information and opportunities for consultation.

55. Parents have a very positive view of the work of the school. They believe that teaching is good and that the school has high expectations of their children. They think that their children are making good academic progress and developing well as mature and responsible young people. Parents say that the school is very well led and that it has a strong partnership with them. Parents are very positive about the wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as art, music and sport, which enrich the pupils'

experiences. They value teachers' generous giving of their time out of school hours. Parents say that the pupils' achievement planners and the good programme of parents' evenings work very well as a means of communication with school. They are pleased with the way the school consults them about policies and future plans as well as their individual child's needs. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are very pleased with the way the school supports their children.

56. A minority of parents are dissatisfied with the amount of homework their children are expected to do. Inspectors found that there is some inconsistency in setting homework. The large majority of parents who completed the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with pupils' annual reports but the inspectors found that the reports do not always give parents a clear picture of standards attained, progress made, or what the pupil needs to do to improve.

57. The school provides valuable information for parents of prospective pupils before the child begins Year 7. On their child's first day in school, parents meet their form tutor, exchange information and sign the home-school contract. Parents of pupils in Years 8–11 are involved with the setting of GCSE and National Curriculum targets at action-planning days, so that they can help to monitor their children's progress. These planning days also present a good opportunity to discuss and help to resolve any problems with attendance or pupils' attitudes to school and work. Parents of sixth-form students receive monthly monitoring reports. Consultation evenings at appropriate times of the year also enable parents to discuss their children's progress. Parents of Year 9 pupils receive information on GCSE options at a discussion evening, which helps to prepare them and their children to make appropriate choices.

58. Learning mentors and the educational welfare officer attend parents' evenings but they also provide very good support by making home visits when any pupils' attendance or progress is giving cause for concern.

59. Student achievement planners are designed to enable regular communication with parents. As well as a daily record of homework and a record of test results and targets for each subject, the planners provide a great deal of valuable information that includes school rules.

60. The school has a good partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are able to contact the school easily when problems arise and they are invited to take part in their children's annual and transition reviews. Parents are generally pleased with the progress their children make and also with the care that the school provides.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The school is very well led and is well managed and there is a clear focus on raising standards. The aims of the school are clearly expressed and are well understood. The headteacher and senior management team work together closely and harmoniously, providing highly effective leadership for the staff. The senior management team has established a very good climate for learning which reflects high expectations of effort and achievement. The senior management team monitors the quality of teaching rigorously and a system of performance management is in place. The headteacher and the senior staff provide clear educational direction and, consequently, the morale of the staff is high and teachers are confident about the quality of their work.

62. The school's development plan provides a good framework for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Raising standards in literacy is part of the plan to compensate for the pupils' low starting points at the start of Year 7 and this strategy is consistently evident in all subjects. Issues relating to special educational needs are covered in the school development plan, and are regularly considered at meetings of the governing body.

63. The governing body supports the work of the school with energy and commitment and governors often visit the school informally. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively in most respects and their work is particularly beneficial in financial management. However, statutory requirements are not met for the curriculum in a number of respects.

64. Middle management responsibilities are carried out effectively overall. Most subject heads monitor

and develop the teaching within their departments. The management of subjects is generally good but the management of design and technology is unsatisfactory because there has been a lack of leadership, weaknesses in the planning of the subject curriculum and in the assessment of standards.

65. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and provides effective educational direction. The national Code of Practice relating to pupils with special educational needs is fully in place and statutory requirements in respect of pupils with statements of special educational need are met. The school now caters for a wider range of special needs, and staff confidence in dealing with these needs has improved as a result of training, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and practical experience. Staff as a whole are now much more aware of the different ways in which pupils' individual needs can be identified and met effectively. The department's immediate priorities for improvement include the extension of work in relation to the national literacy and numeracy strategies, the refining of short term targets in pupils' individual education plans and the development of efficient means of communication between the various people responsible for the support of pupils.

66. There are sufficient teachers to teach the curriculum as it stands and there is a good match between the curriculum and the teachers' subject expertise. However, some adjustment in staffing will be needed in order to teach the full range of National Curriculum subjects to all pupils. The organisation of classroom learning support ensures that available hours are used to maximum effect. The arrangements for the induction of new teachers and for teachers' further training and professional development are excellent.

67. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall but there are shortages of texts for design and technology and modern languages. There are insufficient computers for music, design and technology and English. The library is well managed and well stocked and is much used by pupils for research.

68. The accommodation is satisfactory. The school buildings are in good repair though classrooms are sometimes crowded. The accommodation for music is unsatisfactory but, despite that, pupils achieve well because the teaching is so effective. Accommodation in the learning support centre is adequate though there is no common room for support staff and no suitable room for individual lessons. Resources of books and equipment are good.

69. The school's finances are in good order and the budget is in balance. The cost of educating a pupil at this school is average for secondary schools with sixth forms. Delegation of financial powers to the headteacher is appropriate. Governors fulfil their responsibilities for financial management very effectively and have been successful in their pursuit of funding for a new sports hall, which benefits the school and the local community. The specific grant for pupils with special educational needs is used effectively for its designated purpose. The sixth form is efficient and is financially self-supporting.

70. The senior staff and governors work hard to ensure that the school obtains best value and that money is well spent. A substantial amount has been saved, for example, through negotiating cleaning contracts. Administration runs smoothly, contributing effectively to the overall efficiency of the school.

71. This is a very much improved school since its previous inspection. The GCSE results have improved at a much faster rate than found nationally and the school has achieved a national award for improvement. Teaching has improved substantially, especially in physical education and modern languages. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now above average. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in extending and developing the provision for special educational needs.

72. Based on the good quality of education the school offers, the effectiveness of its leadership, teaching, the achievement of pupils in relation to their prior attainment, the good ethos of the school and the effective use it makes of its resources, the school is effective and gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

73. In order to improve the work of the school further, the governors, headteacher and staff should take

the following action:

- 1) ensure that the curriculum meets statutory requirements in Years 7-11 for modern foreign languages and design and technology;
(see paragraphs 35, 37, 63)
- 2) raise standards in mathematics in Years 7-11 by
 - setting targets to be achieved in lessons,
 - raising the pace of lessons,
 - improving the consistency of homework so that pupils master the topics begun in lessons;
(see paragraphs 2, 3, 5, 20, 86, 87, 91)
- 3) raise standards in design and technology by
 - improving the teaching of design skills;
(see paragraphs 3, 5, 21, 22, 114, 117)
- 4) improve the management of design and technology by
 - providing the clear educational direction necessary to improve teaching and to raise standards;
(see paragraphs 64, 119)
- 5) and improve the quality and consistency of the marking of written work, and check that pupils are shown clearly how to improve the standard of their work.
(see paragraphs 23, 27, 132, 157, 162, 177)

In addition to these main matters for improvement the governors may wish to consider Including the following more minor matters in their action plan:

- check that homework is set consistently in all subjects; (see paragraphs 31, 56, 91, 104)
- Improve the textbook resources in design and technology and modern languages; (see paragraph 67)
- improve the accommodation for music; (see paragraph 68)
- improve the ICT facilities, especially for music, design and technology and English.
(see paragraphs 67, 92, 151, 171)
- improve the setting of short-term targets in individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs (see paragraphs 39, 50, 65)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	179
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	25	50	20	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1174	169
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	363	0

Special educational needs

	Y 7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	296	9

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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		Total
	2000	248		248

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	131	139	131
	Total	131	139	131
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	54 (67)	59 (48)	55 (50)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	21 (35)	31 (26)	20 (12)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	191	142	139
	Total	191	142	139
Percentage of pupils At NC level 5 or above	School	77 (69)	57 (51)	56 (52)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils At NC level 6 or above	School	37 (34)	26 (27)	26 (12)
	National	31 (21)	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	225	n/a	225

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	87	205	216
	Total	87	205	216
Percentage of pupils achieving The standard specified	School	39 (31)	91 (89)	96 (94)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33 (29)
	National	38 (38)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year Who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	50	2	52

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.7	10.0	14.5 (14.3)	2.6	1.0	2.5 (4.0)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	9
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1318
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	38	3
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)	80.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	574

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.5
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
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Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3218595
Total expenditure	3153418
Expenditure per pupil	2415
Balance brought forward from previous year	8179
Balance carried forward to next year	73356

Key Stage 4	23.9
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Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1343
Number of questionnaires returned	89

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	48	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	41	3	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	42	8	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	50	16	4	0
The teaching is good.	49	43	6	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	34	8	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	28	7	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	32	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	43	4	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	54	36	1	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	49	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	47	4	3	2

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

ENGLISH

74. The results of national tests in 2000 of pupils at the end of Year 9 were below average but average in comparison with those of similar schools. Taking the results of the past three years together, they have been average. The present Year 9 pupils are achieving well. They began Year 7 with overall reading ages considerably below average for their age and but they have caught up and their overall standards are average.

75. The pupils continue to make good progress in the GCSE course and achieve well. By Year 11, the standard of their work, as seen during the inspection, is average for their age. The GCSE results reflect these standards. In 2000, the results were average for boys, nationally. Nearly half the candidates achieved grades A*-C in English and the results are improving in line with the national trend. Only half of the Year 11 were entered for GCSE English literature but nearly all of them achieved grades A*-C.

76. Standards in the sixth form are average and represent good achievement. In particular, the quality of written work improves considerably. The A-level results have been in line with the national average for several years and all candidates passed the examination in 2000, as was also the case in the two previous years.

77. Pupils produce extended pieces of writing in a variety of styles, developing in quality as they progress through the school. Although the boys listen and speak well in lessons when they have the opportunity to do so, opportunities to speak at length are not given often enough. They read aloud confidently, although there is little evidence that they read widely outside of lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils progress at least as well as other pupils.

78. The teaching is good overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teaching is always good and sometimes very good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and manage them well in lessons. Lessons are well-planned and utilise a variety of successful methods: good learning was seen in lessons on the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and in constructing poems in response to *Treasure Island* on computers in the Learning Resource Centre, where pupils honed their keyboard skills as well as working creatively. Teachers take great care to prepare boys for tests and examinations, and do this in stimulating ways. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is mostly good and often very good. Whether considering poems in the set anthology or analysing media texts, the teachers use appropriate and innovative methods. Lesson time is used effectively and relevant homework is regularly set. The same is true of sixth form lessons, which were always good. Teachers know their subject well, as was seen in their mastery of the set texts, and they use their knowledge to good effect. Throughout the school, teachers assess pupils' progress effectively and their questioning of their pupils not only stimulates their thinking but accurately reveals what is being learnt.

79. Pupils' attitudes are also key factors in their achievement. Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school; they settle quickly to work and collaborate well with one another and co-operate with their teachers. Most are keen to participate in lessons, where relationships are usually good. They respect their teachers, who are able build effectively on the pupils' commitment to learning.

80. This large subject department is well managed and benefits from skilful and experienced leadership. The teachers are deployed effectively and their teaching is adequately monitored. Detailed assessment information is kept on all pupils, and appropriate targets are set, based on the data held. It would be sensible to further increase the proportion of boys entered for GCSE English literature, and the teachers have plans to do this. The previous report also stated that the curriculum could be further enriched through drama and media studies. Though drama is taught as part of English, it receives little prominence. Drama is a GCSE option in Year 11, but it is not currently offered in Year 10. The under-emphasis of drama is regrettable because there are few opportunities for boys who are gifted in drama and public speaking to develop their talents and the school should be careful that existing opportunities do not vanish altogether. There is no drama studio, although accommodation for English is adequate. The resources for learning are generally good although more computers are needed.

81. The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. More boys are reaching nationally expected standards at age 14 than previously, and more boys achieve higher GCSE grades. The continuing success rate at A-level has led to large numbers choosing to study for AS English in the sixth form this year. This popularity is adequate testimony to the high regard that pupils have for the subject.

Key skills – literacy

82. The reading ages of many boys entering the school in Year 7 are below their chronological age of 11. Test results at 14 and the rising GCSE results indicate that good progress is being made in the development of literacy.

83. The teaching of literacy is good overall. In all subjects, key words are displayed in the classroom and referred to in the course of the lesson. Writing frames to improve the structure of written work are used widely and consistently and are particularly effective in science and geography and lead to worthwhile extended writing. In many lessons, for example, in history and modern foreign languages, teachers consistently correct faults in spellings and sentence structure. Boys' reading for pleasure is encouraged and extended in form-time.

84. The school is not complacent about standards of literacy and is committed to further improvement. In-service training has been provided effectively for the whole teaching and support staff in literacy, drawing on external expertise. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced ahead of statutory requirements. Summer schools have been held for pupils before they join the school. Each department has a literacy co-ordinator, and the school's literacy manager monitors the effectiveness of the strategy, which is targeted especially on Years 7 and 8 through separate literacy lessons. However, there are some weaknesses in the way resources are used and the planning of the work.

85. In the longer term, the aim is to ensure that literacy is embedded in every subject area. A weakness of relying on separate lessons is that the various forms of text are considered out of context; however, the strategy is contributing to the progress being made and raising awareness of the importance of literacy throughout the school.

MATHEMATICS

86. Results in the national tests in mathematics at age 14 in 2000 were below the national average; however, they were above the average for similar schools. Since the previous inspection, results have improved at the same rate as the national trend. Current standards of work in Year 9 are below average in arithmetic, algebra, geometry and statistics, and are similar to the previous Year 9 pupils' national test results. Many pupils do not show enough working in numerical questions and do not draw sufficiently accurate diagrams and graphs using a pencil and ruler. However, pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average standards in mathematics; there are fewer high attaining pupils than would normally be expected, and there are more pupils whose mathematical competence is below average. Though the standards of Year 9 pupils' work could be higher, they represent satisfactory achievement for these pupils.

87. GCSE results have improved over the last four years and were broadly average for boys, nationally in 2000 but few boys achieved the highest grades, A* and A. The school enters almost all pupils for GCSE each year, and average proportions achieve grades in the full pass range, A*-G. Current standards of work in Year 11 are below average overall, and below average in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, statistics and trigonometry. Nevertheless, these standards represent satisfactory achievement in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 10. Many pupils are still not showing enough working in written answers, and diagrams and graphs are often crudely drawn in ink, as they also are in Years 7, 8 and 9. The top two classes took the GCSE intermediate examination at the end of Year 10, almost all of the pupils being successful in gaining grades B and C. They are now preparing for entry at the higher tier to improve their grades. Most pupils in the third set are working at levels consistent with GCSE grades B and C. Standards then drop sharply in the next sets with few pupils working at levels consistent with grade C. However, as in previous years, even the pupils in the lowest attaining groups are successfully preparing for GCSE at grades G and F.

88. A-level results in 2000 were well below the national average because some candidates began the course on the basis of GCSE grade C, which is too low to give a secure base for study at this level. Results in the previous year were above average both in terms of higher grades A and B, and pass grades A-E. Standards in Year 13 are currently above average for A-level groups nationally, and represent good achievement for these students. All students have sufficient grasp of topics at this level to gain a pass grade; several can recall processes well and apply them with confidence in a variety of contexts in their written answers.

89. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the good quality of teaching they receive. It is to the school's credit that so many pupils on the special needs register, including those with statements of special educational need, achieve better GCSE results than might be expected from their starting points at the beginning of Year 7. Teachers work hard to ensure that these pupils significantly improve their standards of numerical competence as they move through the school, enabling them to approach the GCSE foundation examination with confidence.

90. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good and support their learning. As at the time of the previous inspection, behaviour in lessons is good. There is no evidence of disruption of learning, and teachers deal well with any restlessness or inattention. When lessons are compelling and interesting, pupils listen very well, answer well orally, and use the lesson time fully. Most but by no means all of the pupils have good attitudes to homework. Pupils usually present their written work well but many do not give sufficient attention to the showing of working out or precision in the production of graphs and diagrams. These habits need to be eliminated if GCSE results are to improve further.

91. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features in Years 7-11, and good in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics, and give clear explanations and instructions. They check that pupils understand previous work before proceeding to more difficult concepts. Class management is good, and learning support assistants play a very valuable role, giving good quality individual support. Hence, pupils understand what they are being taught, and improve their skills in an atmosphere which is conducive to learning. Many of the best lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and much is expected of the pupils. However, there are weaknesses in some lessons, which constrain the rate of pupils' progress. Teachers can speak for too long, causing pupils to lose concentration and become restless. Sometimes there is insufficient urgency and little target setting. Consequently, although pupils complete a reasonable amount of work, there can be a tendency to chatter and waste time. Marking is usually good, and explains clearly what pupils should do to improve. However, this is not always the case as large amounts of uncorrected work were seen in some pupils' exercise books. Some teachers set insufficient homework to ensure that all pupils fully master the topics started in class.

92. The management of the department is good. The head of department is an enthusiast for his subject and leads by example in the classroom, carefully tailoring lessons to the needs of pupils of all ages and levels of attainment. He has generated a good corporate spirit amongst his staff, and expectations of pupils are generally high. The non-specialist mathematics teaching has been eliminated and standards have risen since the previous inspection, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. However, there is still not enough use of computers in the teaching of the subject. More vigilance is necessary in the monitoring of homework, marking, and the rates at which pupils learn in class, so that the best practice may be replicated throughout the department.

Key Skills - Numeracy

93. The pupils' numerical skills are satisfactory. The school is now beginning to build on effective primary school work in numeracy, and extend it coherently across the curriculum. Numeracy skills are well taught. Many mathematics lessons begin with short exercises designed to improve pupils' confidence with number and mental arithmetic. Teachers in all subjects have been involved in a survey to chart the use of mathematics in their work with all year groups, with a view to standardising terminology and teaching procedures. Although this area is not yet fully developed, teachers are aware of pupils' general levels of competence and plan their lessons accordingly. Currently, pupils have sufficient numerical competence to apply their skills and knowledge to other subjects, especially geography and science.

SCIENCE

94. Pupils make good overall progress in Years 7, 8 and 9. Standards of work of the Year 9 pupils are average overall and represent a good achievement for these pupils. The results in the 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved since the previous inspection. Though they were still a little below the national average for all schools they were well above those of similar schools. There is a planned focus on improving literacy in the science department and the effects of this were seen by the correct use of scientific vocabulary and language in most classes. Most pupils showed that they could apply mathematics and carry out the calculations needed in their science lessons.

95. In Years 10 and 11, the pupils make good progress in their GCSE courses and they achieve well. Standards of work of the Year 11 pupils are broadly average. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of scientific formula and can process results of experiments efficiently, and have a sound grasp of scientific concepts and processes, such as trends in reactivity and osmosis. The teaching enables lower attaining pupils to remember scientific facts by the continuous reinforcement of previous knowledge and a rigorous focus on the lesson objectives. In 2000, the GCSE results were similar to the national average for boys and results have improved in the last few years. The results for the selected group of pupils studying three separate sciences were above that nationally in chemistry and similar in biology and physics. The results of pupils studying single subject science were below average.

96. Standards of the present Year 13 are around average overall. The students' achievements are satisfactory though there is a wide range of attainment in Year 12 and the small numbers in most Year 13 classes lead to a lack of that competitive spark which helps to raise standards. The A-level results were similar to the national average in 2000, though the small numbers involved mean that statistical comparisons are unreliable.

97. Standards in investigative science are above average in both Year 9 and Year 11. Investigations and other practical work ensure that pupils have the opportunity to gain skills such as predicting the outcome of their experiments and relating that prediction to scientific knowledge. They understand the need for fair tests and the importance of the need to evaluate the reliability of their results. Pupils do not use ICT frequently enough to help their learning in science and so their ability to record and analyse information by this means remains undeveloped in science. Standards of work in the other attainment targets are around average.

98. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress due to very good class management and careful preparation of lessons, which produce sustained concentration on their part. Progress of pupils is assessed carefully at regular intervals. The knowledge gained enables demanding but achievable targets to be set for pupils. This works particularly well for pupils in those classes in Years 9-11 where set pieces of work were assessed in terms of the targets set. Achievement and progress in the sixth form are average. The small number of pupils in some groups does not help the cross-fertilisation of ideas, which would help to push forward learning.

99. Behaviour is good in all science lessons. Pupils show great interest in their work and continue to be enthusiastic throughout Years 7 - 11. They are attentive and do not waste time in lessons and persevere at the tasks set. They collaborate well with each other in practical work and have excellent relationships with their teachers who always keep them on task. Pupils with special educational needs, even those with behavioural problems, enjoy science lessons and behave well in them. All pupils ask and answer questions readily, willingly help in demonstrations, for example playing the role of molecules in a lesson on the transfer of heat. They carry out practical tasks sensibly and safely. Attitudes and behaviour have improved greatly since the last inspection.

100. The strength of the science department is its teaching. The good teaching is the main factor in generating the good level of pupil progress and achievement. In both key stages and in the sixth form it is good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. 28 per cent of lessons were very good, 56 per cent were good and the rest were satisfactory. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and in the majority of lessons share the aims for their lessons with their students so they understand both what they are to do and what is expected of them.

101. Teaching for pupils in Years 7 -11 is good. Teachers are very committed to the education of their pupils and have uniformly good relationships with them. Lessons are taught with confidence and vigour. Teachers always have resources prepared and to hand and are constantly thinking of new ways to interest their pupils and teach more effectively. In a Year 9 lesson with less able pupils on static electricity, the difficult concepts were explained well and pupils showed by their questions and answers that they understood about like and unlike charges and their behaviour. Teachers use praise generously when it is deserved so raising pupils' esteem and helping them to persevere with their work. Interest was always created by the variety of activities which were included in lessons. Pupils learned much about the properties of water, in a brisk series of interesting activities in a Year 8 lesson; they were very much involved and, by the end, had both experienced and grasped the knowledge being taught. Teachers include frequent references to real life situations to maintain interest. Good skills are exhibited in questioning and pupils respond readily in their answers and queries. Standards of presentation though good in higher ability classes and satisfactory in the special needs groups are lower than average in other sets in Years 7 -11. Teachers assess pupils regularly and keep careful records of progress. Their awareness of what their pupils can do helps them to plan their lessons effectively. Sometimes the timing of lessons goes awry and so much is packed into them that there is little time to thoroughly summarise the lesson and check on achievement. The use of ICT to support learning in science and to contribute to pupils' ICT skills is insufficient. Schemes of work now include a wide range of activities and additional equipment and resources for ICT have been ordered in accordance with the department's development plan to rectify the problem. Learning within this age band is good in all three knowledge and understanding attainment targets of the National Curriculum - in scientific enquiry it is very good.

102. Teaching is good too for pupils in Years 10-11 with carefully structured courses to ensure high level learning of the knowledge and understanding of the concepts required for the GCSE. Lessons are very carefully prepared to provide a range of activities to keep interest alive and cover the work required. All the good aspects shown in the teaching of the younger children are demonstrated with these pupils too. A particular strength with this age group is the effort made through the teaching to get pupils to really think through what their observations mean. A Year 11 lesson involved pupils in carefully considering the implications of the colour changes they did or did not see when properties of the halogens were being investigated. There is a good relation of the teaching to real life. For example, a lower attaining group was taught a relevant and entertaining lesson on resuscitation with the techniques being demonstrated and practised but also carefully related to the science involved. Learning is good with pupils making very good progress in achieving the scientific enquiry attainment target. In a Year 11 lesson with less able pupils careful structuring of the investigation by the teacher enabled these pupils to succeed in achieving the lesson objectives and to make good progress in their learning of enquiry techniques.

103. Teaching in the sixth form is also good. It is rather different in character because of the small number of pupils in most groups. Lessons are well prepared and carefully structured and teachers have a very good tutorial relationship with the students. Unusual and motivating activities are included such as the devising of a marking scheme for a past AS level paper where pupils worked in groups to decide for what physical facts marks would actually be given. They both learned the physics and how to answer examination questions well. Time was always used well with pupils never off task and their learning was at a good level.

104. In Years 7-11, homework is set in all classes but there is some lack of coherence about its quantity and the tasks set across each year group. The department is already reviewing the position with the aim of achieving a more structured and uniform provision. Marking is inconsistent in these years. Investigations are marked carefully to an agreed scheme. Alternative systems are designated for homework and work completed in lesson time but these are not always applied consistently or rigorously. This leads in some classes to a lowering of the standards of presentation of work by some pupils.

105. The science staff are committed to raising standards and improving all aspects of the department's operation. The head of department provides very good leadership and a clear direction for further improvement. Management is also good. The curriculum is particularly well planned and all statutory requirements are met. The scheme of work is adapted for each class to make sure that activities match the attainment and needs of the pupils. The department enhances progress by providing revision and coursework clubs in Year 9 and Year 11 respectively and a science fun club for pupils in the younger classes. Particularly notable in this school are the high quality displays of pupils' work, advice and

information in laboratories which make them bright and attractive places in which to learn. There is a wide range of extra curricular activities. Some pupils are disadvantaged in Year 12 by the school's decision to include both biology and physics in the same option group so preventing any pupils studying both these subjects at AS or A level. The past attainment in GCSE of some of those studying science in Year 12 makes success more difficult in AS level examinations. Effective assessment of pupils and detailed analysis and recording of data enables the setting of challenging targets for pupils and the monitoring of the department's achievement. The monitoring of lessons, the curriculum and overall standards is also good. Efficient management of materials, equipment, safety and the departmental budget, with the help of the hardworking technicians, greatly contributes to the good quality of science education which the school provides.

ART AND DESIGN

106. The results of the teachers' assessments of Year 9 for 2000 were above average. The inspection also shows that standards in Year 9 are above average and that pupils are achieving well. In Year 7, pupils develop a good appreciation of a range of artistic styles through the work of major artists, such as Gaudi. They understand the influence on his work of natural and organic forms and apply this knowledge well in their own work. Both symmetry and irregularity are used effectively in the decoration of their main pieces. Year 9 pupils understand the importance of research work in enabling them to develop creative ideas and, consequently, their sense of pattern and design is well developed.

107. The GCSE results are consistently above average and have been so since the previous inspection. Standards of work of the present Year 11 pupils are also above average and show that the pupils are achieving well. In a Year 11 lesson on printing, pupils showed that they have a good understanding of 'pop art' and the work of Warhol in his images of film stars which they applied this well in their own printing work based on self-portraits. Pupils are also prepared to step back from their work to take a hard, critical look at it and are not afraid to change or develop their work as it progresses.

108. The A-level results have been consistently around the national average since the previous inspection and all students pass the examination. The proportion achieving higher A and B grades rate, whilst below the national average, has shown steady improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of work of the present Year 13 students are above average and they are achieving well. Standards achieved by Year 12 students taking the new AS-level course are similarly good. In 1998, the department introduced a GNVQ Intermediate course as an alternative to A-level. Although none of these students has yet achieved a distinction, the percentage of those achieving a merit has improved from two-thirds in 1998 to nearly three-quarters in 2000. The success of the Intermediate course has led in the introduction of an Advanced GNVQ course from September 2000. Overall standards and achievement for students taking these courses are good. All sixth-form students understand the importance of preparation and research. Sketchbooks are generally well maintained and students develop clear ideas about the direction of their work and can place their final pieces in context. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the classical influences of Poussin and Claude were re-interpreted well in the realisation of a creation triptych. There was also painstaking attention to detail, as when dealing with the theme of architectural painting.

109. The inspection identified two main areas for improvement in order to further raise standards in art. First, the pupils' critical and analytical skills, both oral and written, require improvement as part of the department's contribution to the development of literacy. All pupils are more secure when describing their work. Though they are beginning to develop evaluative and self-evaluation skills, their analysis and interpretation of art is weaker. Secondly, the department has identified improvements in its provision for the application of information and communications technology (ICT) as part of its development planning. The inspection supports the department's focus for this improvement both in terms of resources and in-service training. However, the existing ICT equipment is used effectively, particularly in the GNVQ courses.

110. Overall, the teaching is good. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and it was good or better in four out of every five lessons and very good in some three out of five. The consistently good quality of the teaching is clearly a strength. The quality of the pupils' learning experience mirrors exactly the quality of teaching: learning is consistently good because the teaching

supports and encourages pupils *to become artists*, and is well focused on enabling pupils properly to develop key artwork skills. As individuals, pupils are enabled to make good progress and, consequently, the quality of learning in art is very good overall. Other principal qualities of the teaching include teachers' professional knowledge and understanding, their expectations of pupils and the effectiveness of their individual teaching styles. Pupils know that teachers have a great deal to offer them and, consequently, their attitudes to the subject and behaviour in lessons are good. Working relationships are good and pupils collaborate well with one another; for example, during group work in Year 7 when making large scale, three-dimensional balloon and *papier maché* sculptures in the style of Gaudi.

111. The development of three-dimensional work was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection. This work is now very much better. Secure foundations are laid down in Year 7, the effects of which as can be seen in the quality of life-size busts, created by Year 11 pupils, from wire and plaster bandage. Three-dimensional work is now a strength of the subject.

112. Art makes a very good and strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development. For example, sixth-form students use religious imagery, drawn from their own Catholic faith and belief, very effectively in their painting. In Year 9, biblical stories of the creation were successfully and effectively re-interpreted in Australian Aboriginal style. Through such work, art reflects the character of the school very well and this is further illustrated in the contribution art makes to the ethos and environment of the school through its extensive display work.

113. The subject benefits from good leadership and management. The teachers are mutually supportive and are committed to raising standards. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. There is clear educational direction and an understanding as to how to achieve continued and further improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Pupils do not make satisfactory overall progress in Years 7 - 9 and are underachieving. The standard of the Year 9 pupils' work is well below average. Though the teachers' assessments made of the previous Year 9 in 2000 indicated that standards were above average, these assessments were almost certainly inaccurate because they gave too little weight to the work in design, which is weak. Pupils also have weak drawing skills, particularly in the use of freehand techniques; however, the teachers are now giving more attention to drawing and standards are beginning to improve as a result. More attention is also being given to design skills but pupils rarely have clear design objectives for their projects and have not learned to evaluate their ideas, other than by personal opinion. Modelling is not used well: it is mostly used to present a final idea, rather than as a means to solve problems, as it should be. Pupils rarely test and evaluate their ideas to make decisions about their designs or their products, except in food technology. A new and more systematic use of design folders in Years 7, 8 and 9 is helping to raising standards of design, though they are still weak. Standards of manufacture in wood, metal and plastics are mostly satisfactory because the development of these skills is planned systematically and pupils take care with their work. A significant number of pupils have no lessons in food technology or work with compliant materials, which is expected in the National Curriculum. However, lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in extra lessons in food technology.

115. The GCSE courses in design and technology tend to be taken by lower attaining pupils. Although standards in Year 11 are well below average, pupils make satisfactory progress. Many pupils are not well prepared for their courses at the outset of Year 10 because of their inadequate experience in earlier years. In relation to their weak start at the beginning of Year 10, the pupils achieve the standards that would be predicted for them. The GCSE results were well below the national average in 2000, and have declined over the past three years. Pupils' ability to make their products in wood, metal and plastics is satisfactory but design folders reveal a similar lack of development as in the first three years of school. This is because many pupils start from the product that they intend to make rather than from clear design objectives. Pupils' understanding of research and development is also unsatisfactory because of an inadequate foundation in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils make inadequate use of computers in their design work though they use them well enough for presentation.

116. Standards of work of the Year 13 students are below average. A-level results in 1999 were below average but all pupils passed the examination with at least grade E. In 2000, the results were very poor and only one of the six candidates passed the examination. However, only two of the students had taken a GCSE course in design and technology before embarking on the A-level course. In the present Year 13, two of the three students have a GCSE in the subject but only one has sufficient experience of making products. Inadequate preparation for the course is the major contributory factor in the poor examination results. However, the students are doing as well as could reasonably be expected, given their unpromising starting points, and their work is better than the previous examination results would indicate. Design folders mostly lack clear objectives and follow a routine rather than focusing on problem solving, as they should but the finished products are technically sound and sometimes skilfully made. The management of the school has made the decision to discontinue the A-level course in this subject.

117. Although the teaching was satisfactory in the lessons seen during the inspection the pupils' folders of work show that the main reason for their underachievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 is that teachers have low expectations of what they should do in design and do not teach the solving of design problems well enough. Teaching is not, therefore, satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, though it is satisfactory in Years 10, 11 and in the sixth form. Other areas of weakness are an indiscriminate use of worksheets and a failure to extend the higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless the introduction of a new scheme of work this year and targets for improving teaching, such as ensuring that lessons are properly summarised at the end, are improving the teaching. The better features of the teaching lie in the teachers' good demonstration and teaching of manufacturing skills, their thorough individual help for pupils, and the good relationships between pupils and the teachers.

118. Pupils try hard in most lessons and take care with their work. Pupils are enthusiastic about working with food, and come in at lunchtimes to prepare for a lesson and stay after school to extend it. Pupils develop independence in their using tools but are dependent on teachers when designing.

119. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. It lacks the clear direction necessary to raise standards and, until very recently, there was a lack of coherence in schemes of work and approaches to the subject. However, the planning of the curriculum is beginning to improve. Improvements in assessment and monitoring of standards have also begun.

120. Staff absence has adversely affected standards in recent years. Accommodation is adequate but there is no suitable space to display examples of pupils' work. There are insufficient textbooks for GCSE and a lack of appropriate computer hardware and software for designing.

121. Design and technology has made insufficient improvement since the previous inspection. Standards are lower than before. The curriculum still does not meet National Curriculum requirements. There have been some very recent improvements in assessment and monitoring but further attention needs to be given to teaching design skills properly.

GEOGRAPHY

122. The attainment of the annual intake of pupils to Year 7 is below average. Pupils make good progress during the first three years and, by Year 9, standards of work are average for the pupils' age and represent a good achievement in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Year 7. Recent assessments made by the teachers at the end of Year 9 also indicate average standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The proportion of boys who reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum is below average though it is consistent with the pupils' prior attainment.

123. Good teaching of practical geography skills in Years 7, 8 and 9 provides a secure foundation for coursework at examination level and geography is a very popular subject at GCSE. The pupils achieve well and their standards of work are average by Year 11. This is reflected in the GCSE results, which have been consistently in line with the national average for a number of years. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and succeed in the GCSE examinations. The pattern of GCSE results shows that pupils achieve fewer of the highest A* and A grades than found on average. Again, this is consistent with the pattern of attainment on entry to the school.

124. Sixth-form students achieve very well. The standard of their work is above average and the A level results were good in 2000 and above the national average over the past three years.

125. The teaching is good overall and is very good in the sixth form. It was very good or excellent in half of all lessons seen; it was good in most of the rest and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The good teaching ensures that the boys make consistently good progress in Years 7-11 and very good progress in the sixth form. The teachers are well qualified and know their subject well. Good lesson planning is based securely on schemes of work that identify clear learning objectives. This can be seen in the way in which the teachers organise their lessons, explain the work clearly to the pupils, ensuring that appropriate resources are ready. In particular, teachers make very effective use of simple resources, such as overhead projectors, to illustrate points. Well-chosen video clips punctuate lessons at appropriate points and captivate the boys' interest and imagination; for example, to show how a 'twister' and a rainstorm in turn devastate an area of north America.

126. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily though the teachers acknowledge the need for further training.

127. Effective in-service training and the sharing of good practice through regular monitoring of teaching are developing a recognisable departmental style. The lesson's aims are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson, so that they know what they have to do and why; and these are consistently reviewed at the end of the lesson to consolidate the pupils' learning. Lessons typically proceed at a fast pace and include a variety of activities so that pupils are always interested and attentive in their learning.

128. Teachers are willing to try new methods in order to raise standards and are successfully developing pupils' thinking skills. They are developing groupwork in lessons so that pupils share their learning and develop social skills in role-play exercises, for example, about a national park. Active learning styles engage the pupils in their learning and open questions oblige them to apply their knowledge and understanding, for example, about the reasons for the location of industry in a particular place.

129. Research projects in Year 9 about developed and developing countries provide a stimulus for the highest attainers to extend their achievement but some exercises in class do not extend these boys sufficiently. Sometimes there is a tendency to move the whole class at the same pace; then the quickest workers are held back while they wait for the others to catch up. When extension tasks are provided, boys can work on at their own level and pace. Learning materials, such as texts, are mostly well matched to the individual needs of the pupils.

130. Teachers give their free time generously to take students abroad, for example, to the French Alps and New York. Relationships are very good; the pupils are well managed and discipline is consistently good. Pupils are carefully taught good learning habits in the lower school and they are constantly encouraged to raise their aspirations. The attitudes and behaviour of the boys are good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. These make a major contribution to the successful teaching and learning.

131. Those with low prior educational attainment and boys whose educational needs are special make good progress. They receive effective attention and support in lessons. Learning support assistants work with teachers to prepare their own activities in advance and keep thorough records of pupils' work. This information is then used to involve pupils in setting their own targets.

132. Marking is thorough but does not show pupils clearly enough how to improve their work. Homework is set, marked and quickly returned. Extended research homework provides well for pupils to develop independent learning habits.

133. Teachers make the best of the accommodation to provide an attractive environment for learning, which is enhanced by displays of pupils' work. Resources are generally good but there is no satellite weather station and no blackout facilities and this limits the range of possible activities.

134. This is an effective subject department that continually strives for improvement. Leadership is very good and results in an enthusiastic, committed and successful team of teachers. The monitoring of

teaching is effective and this results in continuous improvement in pupils' learning. Newly qualified teachers are well supported.

HISTORY

135. In 2000, the results of the teacher's assessments were average which is similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Standards of the present Year 9 pupils' work are average for their age. In relation to their below average levels of literacy at the beginning of Year 7, this represents a good achievement. Pupils have a good capacity to locate events accurately in a historical timeframe. They have a sound knowledge of aspects of British history and of the wider world, and understand the causes and results of changes brought about by events such as the industrial revolution. They make comparisons between aspects of life at different times in the past and readily use a wide range of sources of information for their investigations. Higher attaining pupils have the ability to evaluate their work in the way which would be expected of them. Pupils' understanding of why there can be different interpretations of the same event is more limited because they lack experience in using this historical skill. Most pupils use a wide variety of presentation of their ideas and the results of their investigations. All pupils use computers to help with their learning, but the frequency of opportunity to do so depends upon the teacher and varies from one class to another.

136. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 because they have very positive attitudes to learning and because the teaching is good. The organisation of pupils into groups of broadly similar attainment means that teachers can adapt their lessons to provide the right challenge for each class so that all can make similar progress. Pupils' special educational needs are well known to their teachers, who collaborate effectively with learning support assistants.

137. Basic historical skills are well established in Year 7. For example, time-lines and family relationships are used to develop an understanding of chronology and pupils begin to select and combine information from a range of sources. In Year 8 pupils begin to use their knowledge and understanding to write at greater length about the events which they study, for example, the religious changes of the sixteenth century. Higher attainers begin to analyse the reliability of evidence; for example, about attempted justification of the dissolution of the monasteries.

138. GCSE results have improved since the previous inspection, when they were below average. Results since 1997 have been broadly average, except in 1998, when they were above average. In 2000, results were average overall, though comparatively few pupils attained the highest A* and A grades. Standards of Year 11 pupils' work are average. Higher attainers use their sound knowledge and understanding well in their detailed analysis of events such the New Deal, and confidently select and evaluate evidence from a range of sources. The work of average and lower attaining pupils is less detailed and source work tends to be more descriptive. Good teaching and positive attitudes to learning of the majority of pupils ensures that they make good progress and achieve well in Years 10 and 11

139. A level results since 1999 have been below average and too many students have failed the examination. The school's entry policy has recently changed and the department has worked hard to devise and implement strategies for improvement, to good effect. Standards of Year 13 students' work are now average and the students are achieving satisfactorily. Students are well organised and higher attaining students write at length in well-argued extended essays. The weaker students receive good support from teachers in examination technique and the preparation of written work. In Year 12, where students are following the new AS level course, standards are above average and students are achieving well.

140. The overall quality of teaching is good and the strengths reported at the time of the previous inspection remain. Of the eleven lessons inspected, three were satisfactory, one was very good, and the remainder were good. The examination of pupils' written work also indicated good teaching and the quality of marking is a strong feature. Teachers' detailed comments show pupils how to improve their work although there is some inconsistency in the extent to which pupils are told of the standards they are reaching in terms of national and examination criteria. Lessons are well planned to teach all the key historical skills, other than interpretation, which requires more attention. Resources are well chosen and appropriately adapted to ensure that all pupils are challenged in lessons. A wide variety of teaching styles

is used to good effect and most lessons are interesting. In Year 9, two contrasting lessons on trench warfare in the First World War were both successful. In one lesson, pupils working in small groups assessed the usefulness of the sources of their evidence; in the other lesson, pupils used their good understanding of the nature of trench warfare to create computer-based presentations, comprising photographic images, art, music and sound effects. Questioning is sharp and stems from good subject knowledge; in a sixth-form lesson, the teacher skilfully turned the students' question back to them so that they had to defend their own view for the reasons for the return to the Gold Standard in 1925.

141. Teachers work effectively with learning support assistants to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Relationships are good and pupils' contributions in lessons are valued by their teachers. Key words are displayed in classrooms and teachers encourage pupils to use appropriate technical vocabulary in their written work and in classroom discussion. Homework is regularly set and used to extend and consolidate pupils' learning. Non-specialist teachers teach a few lessons. Careful preparation for these lessons based on good support from the head of department, including the planned observation of lessons, ensures that pupils are able to make satisfactory progress.

142. The generally good teaching is reflected in the quality of pupils' learning, which is also supported by their positive attitudes in lessons. In a Year 7 lesson about the events of 1066, the pupils tested their teacher with demanding and perceptive questions and, without prompting, were able to see similarities in military methods at that time and from their previous studies of the Roman period. Pupils are well motivated to learn and collaborate effectively with each other in pair and group work. Their interest and enjoyment of the subject is reflected in the quality of display work in classrooms and around the school. An embroidered recreation of episodes from the Bayeux tapestry showed a careful attention to accuracy. The vast majority of pupils behave well.

143. History has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. The issues raised at that time, related to teaching and learning, have been resolved. GCSE examination results have improved though A-level performance has not been consistently sustained. The department responded well to the recent changes required in the National Curriculum and was well prepared for the introduction of new sixth-form courses. Procedures for the assessment of work are very good but insufficient use is being made of the information gained from the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9. More opportunities to study aspects of local history should be taught in Years 7 to 9.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

144. Assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000 indicated that an average proportion of pupils reached expected standards. However, the standards of work of these pupils, who are now in Year 10, do not substantiate these assessments. No records of assessment, or samples of work to corroborate them, could be seen during the inspection. Standards of work for pupils currently in Year 9 are below average, but their achievement over time is now satisfactory given a low starting point at the outset of Year 7. Pupils have experienced a lack of continuity in the subject in Years 7, 8, and 9 and Year 8 pupils have had very little experience of information and communications technology (ICT). The picture is improving, however, and Year 9 pupils themselves commented favourably on the improvements in equipment, better teaching of course units, and how they have been enabled to make better progress during the current academic year. Progress is better in Year 7, where a new and much needed scheme of work focuses on the development of key computing skills, which in turn are beginning to raise standards. Whilst pupils are becoming confident in the use of word processing programs, and a range of keyboard and menu commands, they are not yet sufficiently competent in the use of computers as everyday working tools. For example, Year 9 pupils can collect and copy information into a spreadsheet table, but few have any extended knowledge or understanding of the construction of cell formulae.

145. In 2000, the school entered its first group of pupils for GCSE. Results were significantly below the national average and few pupils achieved higher GCSE grades. Overall, information technology was one of the worst performing examination subjects. At the start of the current academic year, a GNVQ Intermediate examination course was introduced for Year 10 with lessons taking place after school on four days each week. Well over 100 pupils attend this out of school course, which is impressive. The results of the external examination for the first unit show 80 per cent of all pupils entered gaining at least a pass; nearly a quarter gained a merit, though there were no distinctions. This course is doing much to

raise pupils' confidence and improve their skills in the use and application of computers. Analysis of the results enables targets to be set for improvement. Discussion with staff teaching the course shows a focused commitment to improvement.

146. Those pupils not following GCSE or GNVQ courses take a relevant course in computer literacy and information technology. Standards are below average; for example, Year 10 pupils have difficulty in the spreadsheet and database units because they have had insufficient previous experience of these software applications.

147. Whilst overall standards in lessons for pupils in Year 11 are below average, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. Basic skills in the use of key programs still need to be taught. However, the consolidation of work through the course is sound. Progress in this respect is steady with gains in learning being gradually secured. As in earlier years, although pupils can operate programs, they cannot yet exploit them effectively or independently enough, or fully appreciate the potential of computing.

148. This year, in the sixth form, A-level and Advanced GNVQ courses have been introduced for Year 12 students. Whilst overall standards in lessons are below average, the students' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their starting points, which are low, as reflected in their results at GCSE. Students sometimes reach good standards, for example, in a GNVQ lesson involving the editing and combining of images though the use of more advanced tools for these purposes was unfamiliar. The school has a suitable, professional artwork package for sixth-form work, and the students were keen to explore this. However, the licence is limited, it has not been networked and is, consequently, only available for individual rather than class use.

149. No analysis of GCSE or sixth form GNVQ Intermediate examination results for 2000 was available during the inspection. The monitoring of standards achieved in examinations has been unsatisfactory. Expectations do not appear to have extended beyond pass level and no targets have been set for merit or distinction levels in GNVQ courses.

150. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen are good throughout the school. Pupils presently are making good progress in their lessons because teachers clearly set the context of the lesson, and learning objectives are well explained. Teachers show good professional knowledge and understanding, for example through demonstrations of programs, and presentations using appropriate technology. There is now a very firm focus on key information technology skills in order to raise standards. When such skills become firmly established, for example, in the use of presentation programs in Years 7 and 9, progress in learning can be rapid. Pupils are subsequently able to apply their knowledge in other subjects, such as history, where a presentation was being prepared on the First World War. The basic use of spreadsheets is, for example, beginning to be used effectively in geography and word processing skills in English to enhance the presentation of poetry work. Older pupils are starting to appreciate the value of using professional software, for example in GNVQ work on image manipulation. The improving teaching of the subject is increasingly gaining the confidence of the pupils and raising its value in their estimation. Pupils' attitudes and response were never less than satisfactory and were mainly good. This is because the teaching provides good individual support for pupils and encourages their independent learning skills.

151. Overall, there has not yet been sufficient improvement in the raising of standards in this subject since the previous inspection. Until very recently, there was inadequate monitoring of standards, teaching and learning and the planning for progression was weak. The leadership and management of the department in the past have lacked direction and have, consequently, been poor. However, the school has taken steps to improve these matters through a new appointment. New schemes of work have been written for Years 7 to 9, which focus on the development of key computing skills. New GNVQ examination courses are being successfully introduced in Years 10 and 12 for the older pupils. Recent steps taken to deal with the issue raised at the time of the previous inspection concerning the teaching of information technology through other subjects are now beginning to take effect. Senior management, the governors and the parents' association have ensured funding for the necessary computer hardware and software to enable the new courses to be established. Although the numbers of computers have improved to around the national average, these have been concentrated on improving pupils' basic computing skills in the ICT department. More computers are still needed in other subject departments in order that they may exploit the pupils' skills to enhance learning in these subjects, particularly in Years 7

to 9.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

152. French and Spanish are taught in alternate years, with French currently in Years 7, 9, 11 and 13 and Spanish in Years 8, 10 and 12. In Year 7, pupils with special education needs do not study a modern language and in Year 10 and 11, only twenty per cent of pupils study a modern language, both of which represent breaches of statutory requirements.

French

153. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are above average for their age. They are higher than teachers' statutory assessments, reflecting a recent improvement in the quality of teaching in Years 7-9, the increased emphasis in teachers' planning on accurate language use, and the introduction of new course materials. Year 7 pupils get off to a very good start, developing their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills equally well so that they progress quickly and confidently through the early levels. They continue to build up their knowledge of the structure of the language, and most notably the use of tenses, which ensures this fast rate of progress is maintained. This means that, by Year 9, pupils reach above standards for their age, which represents very good achievement. Higher attainers speak confidently, and with good pronunciation, about themselves and their daily routine; they write lengthy accounts of past and future weekend activities; they read short stories and pick out details readily from tapes. Pupils in the middle classes have a good understanding of instructions and of printed texts; they speak in sentences and write paragraphs, using different tenses correctly. Pupils with special education needs respond well orally to flashcards; they understand short bursts of tape and match sentences to visuals, and copy accurately. Since the previous inspection, writing has been successfully targeted so that it is now a major strength, alongside listening and speaking. The good improvement in reading is more recent, and there is still scope for further development of this skill.

154. At the previous inspection, the GCSE results in French were above average. By 1999, the proportion achieving grades A*-C had risen further, culminating in the best ever results for the subject. Just over one third of pupils achieved the higher A*-B grades, marking a significant increase on previous years. Standards of work in the present Year 11 are above average and closely match these results. In response to very good teaching, higher attainers reach standards well above average, most particularly in speaking and listening. They are used to working in the foreign language because teachers speak French consistently in lessons. Regular conversation practice with the foreign language assistant contributes significantly to their oral confidence and very good pronunciation. They identify factual and abstract information from tapes and printed texts and for coursework; they write fluently about everyday things, such as past holidays or their ideal school uniform. Pupils in the lower class also build successfully on their knowledge and understanding and develop all the skills well. They are very thoroughly prepared for the GCSE speaking test.

155. A-level French numbers have remained very low since the previous inspection and there were no entries in 1999 though the two students in 1997 achieved grades B and C. In Year 13, two students take French and their standards of work are above average. The students are achieving well and have made very considerable gains in their ability to understand and discuss topical themes. Some work is impressive and is consistent with the highest A-level grade.

156. Very good attitudes contribute significantly to pupils' very good achievement. Attitudes in the sixth form are excellent. Pupils come prepared to work hard and behaviour is always very good, which demonstrates their positive response to their teachers' high expectations. They volunteer willingly to practise their oral skills and work very well in pairs. They do their homework and are anxious to catch up work missed through absence but pupils in Years 7-9 do not have a textbook to take home, and this hinders their independent learning. Younger pupils take advantage of the facilities in the Resources Centre to develop their use of information and communications technology. GCSE students attend after school revision classes. Sixth-form students attend conversation classes with the foreign language assistant and regularly attend language days organised by local universities. The annual visit to France is well supported.

157. Teaching in French is very good throughout the school. During the inspection week, teaching was good or better in all lessons observed, just under half were very good and one lesson was excellent. Planning for progression over time is a major strength of the teaching. Common features of lessons are the brisk pace, the very good use of resources and the good range of carefully prepared well-sequenced activities that involve the pupils actively in their learning. Challenging recordings and articles from the foreign press are used to very good effect with older pupils to develop their ability to speak and write on a wide range of topical issues. For example, French newspaper reports of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease were used to familiarise A-level students with key vocabulary and to practise specific language points before the teacher moved on to encourage the students to discuss fully their ideas and defend their opinions about how best to deal with the crisis, all of which served as very good preparation for essay writing. Relationships are very positive; teachers manage pupils very well and give frequent praise. Assessment leads to effective target setting. Marking is regular but needs more rigour to ensure errors are not missed. There are some very good examples, particularly in the sixth form, of the use of supportive written comments but there is a need for more consistent practice.

Spanish

158. In Year 8, standards of work are above average for their age and pupils achieve very well. As in French, pupils develop all skills well because teachers ensure through their careful planning and sequencing of activities that pupils have good opportunities to develop each skill at a similar fast rate. Higher attainers show very good understanding of basic grammar, which they apply correctly in speaking, and writing. Pupils with special education needs make very good progress in lessons because there is good learning support in these groups. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9, who study Spanish as a second language, make rapid progress in the time available and the standards reached are above average for second language learners nationally. Of particular note is their increasing confidence in using Spanish for real purposes, such as asking for help or for permission.

159. GCSE results in Spanish have risen sharply since the previous inspection, although the proportion of pupils studying the language has remained at around thirty per cent. In 2000, the school achieved its best results ever; proportions achieving grades A*-C rose to above average for the first time with a doubling of the numbers achieving the higher A*, A and B grades. In Year 10, standards of work are above average. Pupils continue to learn at a good rate and are achieving very well, consolidating and building on work from the previous year. They learn more tenses and more structures together with a large amount of vocabulary, so that they can speak about familiar topics and write extended pieces about school and free time. Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the use of information and communications technology are lacking.

160. A-level results have improved dramatically with each year of entry, though numbers have remained low. In 2000, the two students achieved passes at grade A and C and performed better in Spanish than in their other subjects. The introduction of the new AS course has led to a significant increase in numbers and to a wider range of ability within the Year 12 group. Nonetheless, standards are already just above average and students are achieving well because the teaching is very good and students are being suitably challenged. Students are becoming increasingly confident in exchanging ideas orally in response to a video or text. When they write on topics such as bullfighting or immigration, most students communicate their ideas fairly clearly and reasonably accurately, showing clear gains in their knowledge since GCSE.

161. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning Spanish throughout the school and this is one of the reasons for their very good achievement. They show a good deal of interest and appreciate the help teachers give them because they are very keen to do well. They settle immediately and maintain a very good pace of working. They listen well, participate enthusiastically in oral activities and work very well in pairs. They learn vocabulary thoroughly for homework. Behaviour is very good. Year 8 pupils take a pride in their work and enjoy using information and communications technology to present their work for display. Sixth-form students attend conversation classes at lunchtime and during the inspection they attended a sixth-form language day.

162. The very good rate of pupils' progress in Spanish is underpinned by consistently very good teaching. Teaching was good or better in all lessons observed; four out of five lessons were very good. Planning for progression over time is very good. Lessons contain a good variety of carefully timed and

well sequenced activities and very good resources which are well chosen to stimulate interest, give practice in each skill and increase pupils' knowledge. For example, in a Year 8 Spanish lesson about clothes, colours and the need to make the correct agreement of the adjective, the teacher made good use of visuals, tape, text and written exercises to gradually build up pupils' confidence in applying the grammar rule consistently accurately. As a final consolidation activity, the teacher organised a game using a set of eye-catching fashion posters, which immediately caught the boys' interest, and encouraged volunteers to give a detailed description of what someone was wearing on one of the posters which the rest of the class had to listen to attentively and match up correctly. Teachers expect pupils to do their very best and time is not wasted. Assessment practice is very good. Work is always marked but there is insufficient use of supportive written comments to help pupils improve.

163. Very good leadership and management of modern languages ensure that teachers work closely together as a team, sharing a common goal to raise standards. Since the previous inspection, rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by the head of department and the sharing of very good practice has led to the raising of the overall quality of teaching and to higher standards. Recent appointments of well-qualified and experienced dual linguists have contributed to this improvement. The main area for improvement is the meeting of legal requirements regarding the study of a modern language by all pupils up to age 16.

MUSIC

164. The attainment of the intake of pupils to Year 7 in music is below average. Pupils make good progress during their first three years and achieve well because of very good teaching. By Year 9, the standard of their work has risen to average and this is consistent with the results of the teachers' assessments of Year 9 made in 2000. Younger pupils quickly develop a strong sense of pulse and rhythm. Higher attaining Year 8 pupils produce imaginative improvisations for their arrangements of twelve bar blues, which they play with good control and dexterity. In Year 9, as a result of highly systematic teaching, pupils have acquired good understanding of fundamental musical structures. They can build triads in a wide range of different scales, create chord schemes, devise bass lines and add simple melodies. They make good progress in reading and writing staff notation. Higher attaining pupils play uncomplicated music on keyboards fluently. All attempt to use both hands and employ sensible fingering. Because of the lack of separate spaces for small groupwork, pupils' independence in ensemble playing is under-developed and their ability to discriminate when listening in order to refine their ideas is inhibited. Pupils of all levels of attainment listen perceptively and use subject language correctly in their written and spoken responses. Younger pupils sing enthusiastically and produce a good tone. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

165. There is no recent history of music at GCSE or A-level but small classes are now established both in Year 10 and in the sixth form. Standards of performing skills in Year 10, in which very few pupils learn to play musical instruments, are below average. Nevertheless, pupils are responding well to very good teaching and, when their lack of instrumental experience is considered, they are achieving well. All pupils compose simple pieces by following guide-lines. They are acquiring a useful range of background knowledge, but the quality of their written responses is restricted partly both because of their limited earlier experience and because a significant number in the group have below average literacy skills.

166. The standards of work of the small number students in the A-level course is average. All students play demanding repertoire stylishly although at times they cannot maintain their stamina, as a result of which the quality of interpretation suffers. They have developed good harmonic skills, and compose imaginatively, although their pieces lack clear structure. Their written work is properly researched and they are developing confidence in expressing their ideas systematically.

167. Pupils at all stages are enthusiastic about music. They co-operate and concentrate well in class and waste very little time when given the opportunity to work independently. They are willing to discuss each other's ideas and to offer critical comment. Their social skills and self-esteem develop rapidly.

168. Teaching is very good overall, and some excellent teaching was seen. Teachers communicate enthusiastically and effectively. Expectations of behaviour and achievement are high, assessment is well used and lessons are well planned with clear objectives, which ensure that pupils learn very well and build systematically on previously acquired skills and knowledge. In one excellent lesson in Year 8, time

was used very efficiently, there was good review of previous knowledge which had been reinforced by homework, and pupils were encouraged to use subject language and make progress by listening and refining their performances. Occasionally, too much time is devoted to a single activity, and the pace of the lesson slows. Teaching is very good in GCSE classes and is good in the sixth form. Students benefit from the wide range of expertise of the music staff, and have good role models, both in the musical competence of their teachers and in the systematic way in which the subject is taught.

169. Around forty pupils have instrumental lessons taught by a team of five visiting teachers. The quality of this teaching is good but the length of lessons, generally taught to small groups, is too short to allow pupils to make fast progress. Extra-curricular activities provide some opportunities for pupils to develop their technique further. Students in the sixth form encourage and support younger pupils by playing alongside them. The sixth-form jazz group is highly accomplished and is popular both in school and on its frequent performances in the local area and beyond, providing good experience for the school's gifted and talented musicians.

170. The management of the subject is good. Procedures for monitoring and improving teaching are well established. Good use is made of the assessment system to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to the needs of all pupils and that lessons are planned effectively to meet those needs. The teachers have a high work-load but the school is taking steps to increase the number of teaching staff. Some Year 9 pupils do not have music lessons. Resources are adequate although classroom percussion instruments are wearing out. Provision for information technology, although greatly improved since the previous inspection, is still inadequate. Because there are few separate spaces in the accommodation opportunities for group work for younger pupils in large classes are severely restricted, with a consequent adverse effect on standards of composing and ensemble playing.

171. The subject has Improved well since the previous inspection. Pupils have regular opportunities to work independently; some provision for information technology has been made although more is required, and vocal work has been firmly established both in the classroom and as an extra-curricular activity. GCSE groups, although still small, are increasing in size, and an A-level course has begun. The school should continue to explore ways of improving the accommodation to provide more spaces for small groups.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

172. Standards are average in Year 9 and 11 and in the sixth form. As they move through the school, pupils learn new skills and knowledge in both traditional sports, such as football, and newer sports such as short tennis. Gifted and talented pupils achieve high standards; they are identified from Year 7 onwards and achieve much success, often at regional, national and international levels.

173. By Year 9, overall standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average in gymnastics and indoor games because the pupils have had little practice in these aspects of the subject until recently, with the completion of the new sports hall. However, standards in swimming are above average. Pupils can swim both front and back crawl with good co-ordination and fluency. Standards in football are also above average and pupils can control and pass the ball with good balance and accuracy.

174. By Year 11, overall standards are again average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are above average in both swimming and football. In football, pupils have improved both their knowledge of tactics in open play and their level of skill in all areas of ball contact. In swimming, pupils have high levels of stamina and technical proficiency. Pupils are beginning to analyse their levels of fitness and devise suitable programmes to improve stamina and performance but this has not yet had time to impact on current standards. GCSE results in 2000, the first year the examination was taken, were slightly below the national average and pupils tended to do less well in physical education than in their other subjects.

175. Standards in the sixth form are average. Students are achieving satisfactorily and are consolidating skills and developing new ones. Three of the four students who took A-level in 2000 passed the examination.

176. Teachers use a wide range of approaches and this variety in lessons helps to ensure that pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard. Attitudes are very good in Years 7, 8 and 9; they are good in Years 10 and 11, and excellent in the sixth form. Pupils and students are enthusiastic and committed and apply themselves wholeheartedly to the physical and intellectual demands their teachers make of them. Behaviour is very good and participation rates are high though in Year 11.

177. Overall, teaching is good. Teaching and learning are good or very good in three-quarters of lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, two-thirds of lessons are good and one third is very good. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and relationships with pupils and students that inspire confidence and ensure that they are unafraid to risk making mistakes. In one Year 9 swimming lesson, the teacher demonstrated to higher attaining swimmers good front crawl technique whilst empathy with the less accomplished swimmers inspired them to swim with confidence and improve their performance. Management of pupils is sensitive but firm and no time is wasted through ineffective discipline or control. Teaching styles have improved since the previous inspection. The requirement for pupils and students to observe each other's performance and analyse and comment on what is good technique and apply this knowledge to their own performance is part of all lessons. Where teaching was satisfactory, rather than good, it was because the teacher did not sufficiently demonstrate the standard he expected pupils to aim for. In one Year 9 badminton lesson, for example, although one of the aims was to improve short service technique, pupils were not shown the clear criteria of what constituted good performance in this area so that they had no standard against which to analyse and evaluate their performance.

178. The leadership and management of the department are good. The issues from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled. Effective procedures are in place for tracking pupils' attainment and progress as they move through the school and pupils' self-evaluation of their work is built into lesson planning and end of unit assessments. Pupils with special educational needs are given appropriate support and activities are structured so that they work at a challenging but realistic level of expectation. Monitoring of teaching is taking place but because of the interruption to the teaching programme caused by the building work, it is not yet well established as a means of improving teaching and raising standards. The department is endeavouring to raise pupils' aspirations when they join the school to a balanced appreciation of sport. There has been no recent risk assessment undertaken and this should be done as soon as possible. Although informal contact between teachers is effective and communication is excellent, there are few formal department meetings when teachers meet to discuss strategic matters, such as raising standards.

179. The teachers are committed to education of their pupils; they know them well as individuals, and care very much about standards. A reflection of their commitment is the wide range of extra-curricular activities they provide, beginning each morning before school begins and continuing during lunch-time and after school.