

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JOSEPH'S HIGH SCHOOL AND SPORTS
COLLEGE**

Horwich, Bolton

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105262

Headteacher: Mr L Conley

Reporting inspector: Barbara O'Brien
13019

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 September 2001

Inspection number: 188007

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Chorley New Road Horwich Bolton Lancashire
Postcode:	BL6 6HW
Telephone number:	01204 697456
Fax number:	01204 669018
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Father Henry Jones
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
13019	Barbara O'Brien	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Community Links.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9184	Geza Hanniker	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1845	Robert Tweed	<i>Team inspector</i>	Equal opportunities; Special educational needs.	
10817	George Raynor	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
13189	Pamela Walton	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
15163	Michael Aston	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Information and communications technology.	
10905	Alan Brewerton	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
17314	Eileen Marchant	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Physical education.	
30901	Susan Schofield	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Art.	
25744	Trevor Osgerby	<i>Team Inspector</i>	History.	
15396	Ronald Bulman	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils.
12475	Stuart Johnson	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Music.	
27503	Marie Foulds	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Science.	
20629	John Bryson	<i>Team Inspector</i>	English; Drama.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's High School and Sports College is a mixed comprehensive school for 830 pupils aged from 11 to 16. In September 2000 the school was awarded Sports College status. The school has many pupils attending from well outside the school's catchment area. Pupils start at the school with a wide range of educational achievement and social backgrounds, broadly in line with the national average distribution. A very small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups; there are none for whom English as a spoken language presents a difficulty. The proportion of pupils in the school identified as having special educational needs, including pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Joseph's High School and Sports College is a very effective school. Standards of attainment are above national averages overall and the standard of work seen during the inspection was good in all subjects and at all ages. Pupils make very good progress during Key Stage 3 and good progress during Key Stage 4. The proportion of higher grades A*/A achieved at GCSE is particularly commendable. The overall quality of teaching is good or better in all subjects and teachers have high expectations. The personal development of pupils is very good, strongly supported by an effective pastoral system. The overall management of the school is good, with the leadership of the headteacher a strength of the school. The school has a clear sense of purpose and an understanding of what needs to be done to continue to improve. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The headteacher provides very good leadership strongly supported by the senior management team.
- The quality of relationships, attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are strengths of the school.
- The standards achieved by the school are high across all subjects; the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A* to C is above the national average.
- The consistently good quality teaching across all subjects is a strength of the school.
- Pupil' attendance is very good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance in the school are excellent.
- The school is very effective in attending to the pastoral care and personal development of pupils, including their moral and social development.
- The school has developed excellent links with the local community, which are enhancing the learning opportunities of all pupils to very good effect.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities by the school is excellent, as is the level of interest and involvement in these activities by the pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The school needs to meet all the requirements for Information and communication technology in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The quality and use of marking and assessment needs to be more consistent in order to raise standards further.
- Greater consistency is required in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by managers at all levels.

The school has no major weaknesses and strengths significantly outweigh the weaknesses. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has maintained a programme of continuous improvement since the last inspection in 1996. Overall, progress has been good. The key issues raised in the last report have been addressed. The school now has a coherent long-term plan that incorporates the budget, accommodation, staffing and curriculum developments. Accommodation has been expanded to include three temporary classrooms and some internal restructuring. The curriculum has been reviewed and appropriate changes made. All heads of department have attended training on monitoring and evaluation and the use of statistical data to set targets for their departments. There is a rolling programme for reporting back to the governing body. Whilst there has been some improvement in the effectiveness of middle managers in monitoring the work of their departments, there is still some inconsistency of practice that needs to be addressed. All statutory school policies have been developed and ratified by the governing body. In-service training on teaching and learning styles, followed by a review of practice, has resulted in the use of a more extensive range of teaching strategies. This has ensured that the learning needs of all pupils are more effectively met. National Curriculum requirements are now being met for art and design and technology. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provision has been improved, but the use of ICT across the curriculum is under-developed. The school does, however, have plans in place to rectify this in the coming year. Good progress has been made by the school in ensuring that pupils are given a deeper understanding of other cultures. All school resources have been screened to reflect a multi-cultural society and, in drama, pupils study Chinese and African conventions. The school is well placed to continue with its improvement plan

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	C

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	
<i>D</i>	
<i>well below average</i>	E

Overall, results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in English, mathematics and science have been above the national average for the last three years. In 2000, the overall results in English, mathematics and science were well above average. In

comparison with schools in similar circumstances, the overall results were above average in English, mathematics and science. This represents very good progress by pupils up to the age of 14.

The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C in 2000 was above the national average in all subjects. The overall GCSE results have remained above the national average for the last five years. In 2000 the results for both boys and girls were above the national averages for their gender. The GCSE results for 2001 show an improvement on those achieved in 2000, with the school exceeding its published targets. At the time of the inspection no data was available to make national comparisons or comparisons with similar schools.

Based on the lessons and work seen during the inspection and in the light of prior attainment, pupils make good progress as they move through the school with very good progress made during Year 7 through to Year 9. By the end of Year 9, pupils achieve good standards in art, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education. They achieve very good standards in English, drama, mathematics, music and science. Overall, progress is good in years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve good standards in the light of prior attainment in art, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education. They achieve very good standards in design and technology, English, mathematics, science and music. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in all subjects. Consistently, the great majority make good progress across the school. Standards achieved by boys in English, design and technology, history and mathematics are particularly good. Statutory targets for pupil performance have been set, and to date, exceeded.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They are enthusiastic learners and proud of their school's achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the pupils is very good. There is a friendly and calm atmosphere in the school buildings.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, and pupils have a very high regard for one another.
Attendance	Pupils' attendance is very good and significantly better than most secondary schools. The high attendance rate makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

No teaching was observed in Year 11 since all Year 11 pupils were engaged in work experience during the week of the inspection. In this instance, intensive inspection of pupils' work, teachers' plans and examination results were used to come to a firm judgement that the quality of teaching in Year 11 is good.

The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Teaching is a strength of the school. The teaching was satisfactory or better in every lesson seen, in the majority of lessons it was good or better and in about a third of lessons observed it was very good or excellent. These figures show an improvement since the last inspection. The high quality of teaching supports pupils' achievement and results in above average progress for pupils at all levels of attainment. The quality of teaching in English is good and often excellent. In mathematics it is very good with some outstanding features and in science it is very good. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught, and the quality of teaching in discreet information and communications technology is good.

Particular strengths of teaching include teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, the high expectations set by teachers and the management of pupils. As a result, pupils demonstrate genuine effort, work at a productive pace and show good concentration and interest. Pupils' work is marked regularly, and many teachers provide very constructive comments which enables pupils to improve their work. The quality of homework is generally good and contributes to the reinforcement of class work and preparation for future work. Pupils with special educational needs are taught effectively and make good progress.

Pupils' learning is strongly supported by this high quality teaching. The response of pupils is consistently very good with attitudes to learning that demonstrate interest, commitment and a desire to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities for all pupils. Pupils gain additional benefits from the Sports College status and the recent expansion of vocational courses. The current arrangements for ICT provision do not fully meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school provides good opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. Good teaching enhances their learning. They benefit too from the extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual and social development is excellent and that for moral development is very good. There is a good range of opportunities for cultural development, including a multicultural dimension in a number of subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral system for the care of pupils is a significant strength of the school. The school provides a safe and secure environment for learning. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are satisfactory.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has good links with parents. Good quality information is provided for parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership, strongly supported by the senior management team. Overall, middle managers, including heads of departments provide good leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are systems in place for monitoring and evaluation of performance but these need to be implemented more consistently at all levels of management.
The strategic use of resources	There are sufficient staff to meet the demands of the curriculum except in ICT. Overall, the accommodation and provision of learning resources are satisfactory. The principles of Best Value are applied in the management of resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons • The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home. • Some parents would like more information about how their children are getting on at school.

More than 86 percent of parents, in the 405 questionnaires returned, responded positively to all aspects of the work of the school. The meeting for parents presented a very positive picture of the school. It is the inspectors' view that homework is set consistently and, in the main, provides an appropriate extension to work done in the school. The school's reporting system and parents' meetings provide a good means of keeping parents informed of pupils' progress. However, the reports do not always provide a clear indication of what pupils need to do in order to improve their work. There was an expression of concern about the arrangements for setting of pupils by prior attainment in selected subjects. It was the view of the inspectors that these arrangements do not have a detrimental effect on pupils' attainment.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards of attainment are above the national average overall, and well above average in some respects. Tests taken by the pupils entering Year 7, together with the national test scores from Key Stage 2, suggest that the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average distribution. Overall, results are average or above average when compared with schools in similar circumstances. An exception to this is attainment of five or more A* to G grades at GCSE which in 2000 were below those of similar schools.
2. Overall, results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science have been above the national average for the last three years. In 2000 the overall results in English, mathematics and science were well above average. In comparison with schools in similar circumstances, the overall results were above average in English, mathematics and science. Overall this represents very good progress by pupils up to the age of 14.
3. The percentage of pupils gaining Levels 5 or above in English in 2000 was well above the national average. The percentage gaining the higher Levels (6 and above) was also well above the national average and above that for similar schools. The results for boys and girls were above the national average for their gender, with the boys' results above the national average by a greater amount than the girls'. The percentage of pupils gaining Levels 5 and above in mathematics in 2000 was well above the national average. The percentage gaining the higher Levels (6 and above) was also well above the national average and above that for similar schools. The results for boys and girls were above the national average for their gender with the boy's results above the national average by a greater amount than the girls'. The percentage of pupils gaining Levels five or above in science in 2000 was well above the national average. The percentage gaining the higher Levels (6 and above) was well above the national average and above that for similar schools. The results for boys and girls were above the national average for their gender with the boys' results above the national average by a greater amount than the girls'.
4. The 2001 test results show that the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 and above was well above the national average, as was the proportion gaining the higher levels in all three core subjects. At the time of the inspection, no data was available to make comparisons with similar schools.
5. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C in 2000 was above the national average, whilst the proportion gaining five or more grades A* to G was close to the national average, and the proportion gaining one or more grades A* to G was well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C are close to the average whilst the proportion gaining five or more grades A*-G was below average and for those gaining one or more was above average. The overall GCSE results have remained above the national average for the last five years. In 2000 the results for both boys and girls were above the national averages for their gender.

6. The 2001 GCSE results show an improvement on those achieved in 2000, with the school exceeding its published targets. At the time of the inspection no data was available to make either national comparisons or comparisons with similar schools. The targets set by the school were challenging, and were exceeded.

7. Overall, the 2000 GCSE results in English and English literature were significantly higher than results nationally for both average points and for the proportion of higher grades A* to C. Over the last three years, average points have remained stable. During the same period, results for both boys and girls have exceeded the national average. In 2001, results were much the same although the number of pupils gaining A* and A grades at English rose significantly. Girls achieved higher standards than boys in English. Boys achieved higher standards than girls in English literature.

8. Overall, in 2000, GCSE results in mathematics were well above the national averages for both boys and girls, with more than fifty eight per cent of pupils gaining grades A* - C and more than ninety nine per cent of the entry achieving grades A* - G. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels, A* and A, was also well above the national average. Compared with similar schools, these results were average. The performance of boys was similar to that of girls. The results in 2000 are better than those achieved in 1999. Results for the examinations held in 2001 show a further improvement with 63.3 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades. The trend since the previous inspection is in line with the national trend. Comparison between the standards attained in mathematics at the end of Year 9 with the GCSE results at the end of Year 11, shows that the results, overall, represent satisfactory progress and achievement through Years 10 and 11.

9. Standards in science are very good, as indicated by the GCSE results in dual award science. In the 2000 GCSE examinations all pupils entered gained grades A* - G, whilst the proportion gaining the higher grades A* - C was well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. There has been a steady improvement since the last inspection and the results in 2001 show an even more significant rise in the proportion of higher grades. Until 2000, girls outperformed the boys but in the most recent examination the boy's results were better. In the separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics, almost all pupils entered gained grades A* - C and in single award science, almost all those entered gained grades D - G. Pupils taking the certificate of achievement in science gain high awards.

10. The school has maintained high standards at GCSE over a number of years. The overall results for pupils of all attainment levels demonstrate good progress. Good progress is also evident amongst those pupils entered for alternative qualifications, including National Vocational Qualifications and the Certificate of Achievement, although their results are not included in the published achievement figures for 16 Year olds.

11. Overall attainment in the school is good across all subjects. Attainment at GCSE in 2000 in art was above the national average. In all other subjects it was well above average. The 2000 GCSE results were particularly good, in comparison with other subjects in the school, in design and technology, combined science, French, history and Spanish.

12. Based on the lessons and work seen during the inspection and in the light of prior attainment, pupils make good progress overall as they move through the school, with very good progress made during Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9 pupils achieve good standards in art, design and technology, geography, history, Information Communications Technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. They achieve very good standards in English, drama, mathematics, music and science. Overall, progress is good in

Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 11 pupils achieve good standards in the light of prior attainment in art, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and physical education. They achieve very good standards in design and technology, English, science and music.

13. Overall, the level of competence in literacy is very good at the age of 14 and at the age of 16.

14. Pupils' confidence in speaking and listening is very good. Oral work in several subjects has helped to develop speaking and listening skills. For example, good opportunities for discussion are provided in English, drama and history where pupils are encouraged to discuss, analyse and develop ideas. Pupils are encouraged to read from a range of texts, use reference texts and read aloud. For example, in English and history pupils are able to read to the class. There is no co-ordinated school approach for teaching the use of language. There are examples of subjects making a specific contribution to developing pupils' language through the use of subject-specific vocabulary and patterns of language. Many individual teachers support language development in their lessons. For example, there is a good focus on key vocabulary in art, design and technology, drama, English, geography, history, and science. In some subjects pupils are provided with opportunities for different kinds of writing. For example, in a Y7 science lesson pupils were given an opportunity for extended writing about organ transplants. Developing imagination is a strong feature of writing in English.

15. The National Numeracy Strategy, within the mathematics department, is in place and is being used effectively. The use, by pupils, of numeracy skills, in subjects other than mathematics, is good and in some subject areas, such as science and design technology, it is very good. However the school has yet to develop an overall numeracy policy. As a result, the application of numeracy including the knowledge of number operations, and familiarity with the ways in which numerical information is gathered and presented, is inconsistent.

16. The school is developing methods to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils. The school's published target for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C was exceeded in 2000 and 2001. The target was within the agreed 'challenge band' set by the local education authority.

17. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their levels of prior attainment. Consistently, the great majority make good progress from low levels of prior attainment on entry. With very few exceptions they achieve at least a G grade in the GCSE examinations. In history, for example, many pupils with special educational needs achieve a C grade. The attainment and progress of gifted and talented pupils is very good. In 2000 the per centage of pupils achieving grades A* and A in almost all subjects in GCSE was above the national per centage. In combined science, English Language, French and Religious Studies, the per centage of pupils achieving the highest grade, A*, were above the national per centage.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The attitudes of the pupils to the school are excellent and improved on the high standard observed at the time of the last inspection. The pupils are keen to come to school, as their regular attendance testifies. They are enthusiastic learners, sustain concentration and work well in lessons. They contribute to the lessons actively and sensibly and they respond particularly well to good teaching. In a Year 8 physical education class, for example, after the teacher introduced tactical moves and explained elements of passing the ball, all stayed on task and practised industriously to improve their

basketball skills. They work effectively under adverse conditions. An example of their conscientious attitudes is the way they diligently apply themselves to work in the music room, which is too crowded for practical work for many class sizes.

19. The pupils are proud of their school's academic and sporting achievements and its general good reputation in the area. They like the school and are interested and involve themselves in the wide variety of activities the school makes available during breaks and after school. These range from the large number of sports clubs to a pet club; about a hundred pupils participate in the various choirs.

20. The behaviour of the pupils is very good. There is a friendly and calm atmosphere in the school buildings. All the pupils new to the school commented how easily they made friends. Nevertheless, they play energetically in the playground and move briskly between the buildings and along the corridors to their lessons. They know how they should behave from the day they enter the school as the expectations are made clear to all by the teachers at every suitable opportunity. The pupils think that the rules of behaviour and discipline are fair, and staff apply them consistently. The awards for good behaviour are meaningful and are held in high esteem by the pupils. Bullying of any kind is rare. When it occurs, the pupils and their parents are confident that it is quickly and effectively dealt with. The rate of exclusions is comparable to that of similar size schools. It is the last stage of a graduated approach, because the school tries to identify the reasons for such anti-social behaviour and attempts other solutions first, for example mentoring.

21. The pupils' personal development progresses very well throughout their time at the school. The excellent relationships between the staff and pupils, noted by the last inspection, has been maintained. The pupils have very high regard for one another. They take their cue from their teachers who treat them with courtesy. They are trusting and not afraid to make mistakes in front of their peers in their effort to learn. In a Year 9 Spanish class, boys and girls spoke Spanish confidently and listened to the teacher correcting their mistakes without embarrassment. They are perceptive of the feelings and values of others.

22. The teachers make good use of opportunities to debate issues relevant to personal, social and health education; in a Year 9 English lesson, through the reading of American literature, they discussed sensitively the prejudice and discrimination prevalent against black Americans in the Mississippi region in the 1930s. Responding to the destruction and the tragic loss of numerous lives in the World Trade Centre, many pupils placed condolence prayer messages in a prayer basket for the deceased and their families, and victims of atrocities in general.

23. The pupils initiate, organise and collect funds for a number of charities, and contribute generously to a wide range of good causes. Pupils respond readily to requests for help, from helping teachers in the classroom to planting bulbs to improve the environment around the school. The paired reading scheme, where older pupils help the younger ones to improve their reading skills, is a popular way of helping a fellow pupil. Pupils join St Vincent de Paul Society, whose purpose is helping others and doing good work in the community in very large numbers. The school's Society members created a sensory garden with the pupils of a local special school. The pupils enjoy playing co-operatively and competitively, whilst observing the rules of a game, in physical education or in the playground, even when not directly supervised. It is evident in all areas of their activities. In a Year 10 English lesson boys and girls worked in groups to present a reasoned argument; the groups were very aware that the success of their presentation depended on teamwork. They listened to ideas of others and the collaboration was excellent.

24. The pupils respond very well to the wide variety of responsibilities the school offers. The elected form captains often help the form tutors with administrative duties and organise

the form teams. The Year 10 prefects took to their duties with natural authority for the first time during the inspection. The pupils serve as councillors and learn how to represent other people's views as school council members. The council members are clear about their role: 'what could be done better'? At the council's initiative the school introduced a queuing system for lunch that prevents queue jumping. The peer mediators receive special training for counselling and, although relatively few pupils turn to them because of the pupils' high degree of trust in their teachers, they provide a valuable service to the school community.

25. The pupils are making very good progress in organising their own work from a wide range of sources for their classwork, homework and projects. They present the information well and keep their copybooks neat and tidy. Pupils are articulate and confident speakers and participate in external events, for example the Bolton festivals, and are involved with liturgies.

26. The attendance rate of the pupils is very good. It is significantly higher than in most secondary schools nationally. The rate of unauthorised absence is low. As a result of imaginative schemes, and consistently applied effort by the school to improve attendance, the attendance rate improved in the last two years compared to three years earlier. Attendance was very good during the inspection. Though truancy is not a problem, the school is very aware of the individuals who may truant. If these pupils are missing the school makes enquiries about them on the first day of absence. It makes every effort to encourage them to attend. The school also seeks and benefits from the support of almost all the parents in ensuring their children attend school as they should. Furthermore, the education welfare service provides valuable back up in extreme cases. The Bolton police arranges truancy sweeps in conjunction with the education welfare service and it acts as a deterrent for some would be truants. The pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. The high rate of attendance of pupils of all ages makes a significant contribution to their academic achievements and personal development.

27. Pupils with special educational needs show very good attitudes to their learning. They show an interest and determination to improve their work. Pupils who take the learning support optional course in Year 10, for example, show a keen awareness of the opportunity that it provides to improve their basic skills and the presentation of their coursework. In all lessons, they work with sustained effort and take a pride in what they do. They relate well to each other and to their teachers and support assistants.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Teaching is a strength of the school. The teaching was satisfactory or better in every lesson seen, in the majority of lessons it was good or better, and in about a third of lessons it was very good or excellent. These figures show an improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of teaching observed which is good or better is consistent across Years 7 to 10. No teaching was observed in Year 11 since all Year 11 pupils were engaged in Work Experience during the week of the inspection.

29. Pupils' learning is strongly supported by this high quality teaching. The response of pupils is consistently very good with attitudes to learning that demonstrate interest, commitment and a desire to improve. The good progress of pupils throughout the school is largely attributable to the quality of teaching and the pupil's positive attitude to their work.

30. A very positive feature of the overall quality of teaching is the largely consistent quality across all subject areas. The quality of teaching is good in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in art, English, geography, history, ICT and physical education. In design and

technology, drama, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and science the quality of teaching is very good for pupils of all ages.

31. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In science, for example, it leads to well-planned, well-structured lessons in which teaching is often vigorous. In mathematics, teachers make use of their very good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions which challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding.

32. The high expectations that teachers have of the pupils makes a significant impact on their learning. Pupils know that they are expected to apply creative and intellectual effort to their work in order to succeed. In addition, lessons generally proceed at a good pace. Teachers use well-organised lessons and high expectations as a means of ensuring that pupils behave and co-operate. Their management of pupils is excellent. Teachers understand what is needed to interest and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their work and behave in ways which are appropriate to effective learning.

33. The overall use of time, support staff and resources is good. Lessons are generally well planned and the resources well chosen to enable pupils to develop a range of learning skills. However, there is a shortage of general science equipment. More specialised equipment is required generally, to enable teachers to continue the development of Information and Communication Technology within all subjects. When classroom assistants are present, they make a good contribution to the effective progress of pupils' work. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported within the classroom.

34. Teachers generally use a variety of teaching methods which are well chosen to support learning and keep pupils interested in their work. There has been good improvement in the range of teaching strategies developed and used since the last inspection. Good examples of independent learning were observed in science and design and technology. Pupils in the Year 10 GNVQ engineering course are constantly challenged to think about and arrive at solutions, for example, in designing for special groups in society. The planned and designed support materials are effective in extending their problem solving skills. In history, extended writing tasks effectively stretch the higher-attaining pupils.

35. Teachers are becoming increasingly familiar with and confident in the use of ICT, and by the end of the academic year all teachers will have undergone training using New Opportunities Funding to improve their knowledge and application ICT on the teaching and learning of pupils across the curriculum. The use of ICT is being developed very effectively within the day-to-day teaching in science in particular.

36. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but there are inconsistencies across departments in relation to its effectiveness in enabling pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work. It is too often directed toward effort and presentation, with diagnostic, constructive comments lacking. Good assessment practice was seen in science, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, drama and music, where assessment informed teaching and curriculum planning, and written comments in the pupils' work pointed to specific skills or areas of understanding related to subject content. Very good use of constructive oral comments in English lessons help pupils to improve. Homework is given on a regular basis and is generally well used to extend class work and help pupils prepare for future lessons.

37. Good teaching plays a crucial part in enhancing the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers show that they expect very high standards of pupils' behaviour, and their calm and firm classroom management ensures that pupils remain entirely focused on their work. Good planning and an effective use of resources, as in the use of computer software in music, help to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. However, in some subjects, for example, geography and mathematics, there is insufficient systematic planning to meet the individual needs of gifted and talented pupils. In-class support is generally used to good effect to support pupils' learning in history, science and geography. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is inclusive. For the majority of the time they are taught in mainstream classes, and this has a positive impact on the achievement of the pupils.

38. Teaching in English is good throughout the school, and is often excellent. All of the teachers have an excellent knowledge of both language and literature. The majority of lessons are well managed in each year. The overall effectiveness of teachers' planning is very good, particularly the planning for individual lessons and sequences of lessons. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching in mathematics is very good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed. In all but one lesson, teaching was good or better, and in one lesson teaching was excellent. In Years 10 and 11 teaching observed was at least good in all lessons, and in one lesson it was very good. Teachers make use of their very good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions which challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Even though lesson objectives are not always clearly explained, lessons are on the whole well planned. Classroom management and organisation are effective and the brisk pace of lessons matches the needs and tasks of pupils. The key skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught.

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

39. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with a good range of learning opportunities for all of its pupils aged 11-16. Careful planning and sensitive developments have increased the quality and range of its provision in response to changing demands and the recommendations of the last inspection. The majority of parents feel that the school offers appropriate opportunities for their children academically and in a wide range of extra curricular activities. All pupils are encouraged to take full advantage of every aspect of the curriculum. It is sufficiently flexible and varied to allow equality of access and numerous combinations of subjects for older pupils.

40. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and a strong emphasis on collective worship and religious education underpins the Christian ethos of the school. The school's recent acquisition of Sports College status adds a further dimension to the curriculum. The school does not yet fully meet statutory requirements, since ICT remains insufficiently developed in Years 9 and 10.

41. The timetable allocations for most subjects are adequate, although teachers in some subjects, especially the more practical ones such as design technology and music find that 50-minute lessons leave them short of time. Physical education and religious education receive more generous allocations, in accordance with the school's stated priorities.

42. On admission, pupils are assigned to mixed ability forms in which they are taught for most subjects, where setting is not considered necessary. Judicious clustering of subjects such as mathematics, science, design technology and languages yields the benefits of learning in groups of similar attainment, and extra attention for pupils with special

educational needs. The languages curriculum has expanded so that pupils study either French or Spanish and higher attaining pupils study both in Years 8 and 9. A recent policy of identifying and providing for gifted and talented pupils has resulted in some Year 9 pupils taking GCSE examinations in graphic products, and enrichment through extra curricular classes in several subjects, including art and music. The exceptional variety and appeal of the Sports College's provision, ensures that all pupils have the chance to excel in games and physical activities. Drama has proved both popular and successful with very high standards already being achieved. A small number of Year 9 pupils experiencing difficulty in coping with the standard curriculum follow a supportive, individually tailored course run in conjunction with a firm of management consultants.

43. The curriculum offered to pupils aged 14-16 is good. It focuses chiefly on the GCSE but has expanded to include vocational education, making it more relevant to pupils across the ability range. Many pupils have recently gained RSA qualifications in basic computer applications, but a major deficit of the curriculum remains the limited and inadequate provision in ICT. All pupils study a statutory common core of English, mathematics and science, design technology, a language and religious education. Physical education is also a compulsory module, offering additionally a GCSE option and the Junior Sports Leadership Award. Pupils choose further options from the wide selection offered in humanities, the performing arts, languages, and ICT. Biology, Chemistry and Physics are available as separate courses for those wishing to specialise in science. Several departments run additional GCSE classes at lunchtimes or after school to accommodate those pupils wishing to add an extra subject to their options. A further option of studying for GNVQ in leisure and tourism or engineering has proved popular and successful with a minority of pupils. These courses enable pupils to gain first hand practical experience in local business and industry, as well as introducing them to the additional facilities in nearby colleges. The introduction of a course in Key Skills and individually organised learning support has helped some lower-attaining pupils to complete their other studies successfully.

44. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught mainly through the channels provided by the National Curriculum subjects, for example, sex education in science, health education in physical education, relationships and multicultural awareness in religious education. The morning registration time often serves as a forum where form tutors and pupils can address elements of the programme. Many tutors use this valuable time productively, but in other instances, pupils are merely engaged in casual chat, administration and errands. In addition, for specific topics the timetable is suspended and in some instances specialists are brought in, for example, in drugs education in Year 9, the police and a travelling theatre re-inforce the messages. Each year group implements its own PSHE programme, but the co-ordination is very loose. Furthermore, the adherence of the tutorials to the programme, the cross-curricular teaching and the suspended timetable programmes are not sufficiently monitored and evaluated, so the school cannot easily assess their effectiveness.

45. The school makes good provision for careers guidance and vocational education, though some of it is on an informal basis. Some of the preparation for career choices is provided by the form tutors and in cross-curricular studies. The careers co-ordinator provides material and advice. She ensures there is sufficient up-to-date careers information material available in the library for pupils of all abilities. In principle, career preparation starts in Year 7, preparing for work shadowing in Year 8. In Year 9 pupils prepare for option choices with the involvement of their parents. They, and in particular the older pupils, receive regular and independent advice from external careers guidance consultants. In Year 9 pupils make their GCSE and vocational choices, and in Year 11 they participate in work experience.

46. The scope and variety of extra-curricular activities available to pupils is very good. Much of the school's provision is outstanding and is recognised locally as well as nationally through the Schools' Curriculum Award, Sportsmark Gold and the conferring of Sports College status. The drama, art and music departments jointly develop and exploit pupils' talents in the expressive and performing arts by staging well known and much loved musicals. There are girls' and boys' choirs and a school orchestra, as well as free instrumental tuition for many pupils. Pupils take part in public speaking competitions and are successful in those organised locally by the Rotary Club and the Knights of St Columba.

47. The spiritual development of pupils is excellent and is fostered through retreats and in-school missions. Fieldwork in science, geography and history, the environment club and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme take pupils regularly out of school, as do the numerous links with commercial, leisure, and sports organisations. Frequent, beneficial opportunities to travel abroad enrich the curriculum of many pupils. They include a ski course and an educational link in Italy, netball in Holland, as well as regular cultural and historical visits to France and Spain. The school's close involvement with the local and wider community is manifest in the strong tradition of fund-raising and voluntary work with the elderly, the very young, and a neighbouring special school.

48. A rich and stimulating programme of coaching and competitive games in a large number of individual and team sports combines the efforts of teachers, parents and professional organisations. The staff and facilities of many departments including maths, science, art, ICT and languages are available to pupils out of school hours. Many pupils do research, study independently or assist with organisation in the school library. The membership of clubs developing special interests such as chess and pet care is buoyant. Parents and pupils are enthusiastic about the quality and value of the experiences and achievements generated by the school's extended curriculum.

49. Pupils from 11 to 14 with special educational needs follow broadly the same curriculum as their peers. They are beginning to benefit from the school's application of the national literacy strategy. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the added opportunity to take a learning support course which is successful in helping them in their studies in all subjects, particularly in developing their coursework in GCSE subjects.

50. Relations with partner primary schools and colleges of further education are very good. These cordial long-standing links reflect the schools aims as summarised in its mission statement. They have developed beneficially over many years and contribute to the guidance and continuity of pupils' education as they transfer between phases. The smooth transition to secondary school, evident in Year 7, is enabled through contacts between subject teachers and their colleagues in primary schools. Close continuous knowledge of pupils and their families supplements the statistical evidence on which grouping according to prior attainment or provision for special educational needs is based. Local colleges contribute substantially to options choices and careers advice. They provide extra facilities and expertise for NVQ, GNVQ and GCSE courses. The large majority of pupils continue their education post-16 and avail themselves of the entire range of career possibilities present locally and further afield. This is in part due to the sense of security and purpose stemming from these curricular and pastoral links.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The overall pastoral system of care, support, guidance and the welfare of pupils is very good and a significant strength of the school. The child protection procedures are aligned to the practice in the area and satisfactory arrangements are in place. Detailed information regarding the responsibilities of staff is explained in the staff handbook. A

senior member of staff is the designated co-ordinator of child protection issues and she

reminds staff of the essentials of their duties at the beginning of each term. However, there has been no refresher training for staff for some years. Health and safety responsibilities are well defined and there is a good level of participation by the governors. The school continues to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

52. The form tutors and the heads of year are the major providers for the support and welfare of the pupils. The pupils know they can turn to adults in the school with their problems. A further source of effective support is provided by a trained counsellor, who regularly visits the school. In addition, the non teaching staff, the school nurse, first aid providers and peer mediators are vigilant with regard to any problems the pupils may experience,

53. Excellent co-ordinated effort, an imaginative approach and consistently applied procedures support the very good and improving attendance of pupils. The school focuses on the reasons why a pupil absents himself or herself, and tries to find solutions for the problem of the individual. If necessary a special timetable is devised for a few. In search of solutions, the school continually looks for ways to improve and is ready to try out new schemes. Last year an 'Advance' course was introduced for a number of Year 9 pupils to follow. It aims to improve the self-esteem of the pupil so that they gain confidence in their abilities. The effectiveness of the approach is currently being evaluated.

54. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Lines of responsibilities are clearly defined and applied. They support effectively the school's behaviour and discipline policy, which features prominently in the school's brochure. The school's stand against bullying and harassment is also prominently stated in the brochure and commits the school to decisive action against perpetrators. These aims and expectations, combined with the teachers' excellent management and relationships with the pupils, create a purposeful learning atmosphere both in and out of the classrooms.

55. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress and attainment are, overall, satisfactory. However, the school does not yet have a policy which provides clear assessment principles and procedures, or a supporting framework for all subjects. As a consequence, assessment is not at present being used in a focused way in all subjects to raise standards.

56. A range of assessment information about pupils' attainment on entry to the school is collected, including end of Year 6 National Curriculum test results, and the results of cognitive ability tests administered in Year 7. This information is given to departments and used to allocate pupils to teaching groups. It is also used to forecast attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11.

57. Assessment policies from individual departments do not always include the use of mark schemes linked with National Curriculum and GCSE standards. This makes it difficult to make comparative judgements about pupils' achievement and progress across subjects. There is evidence of good assessment procedures in science, design and technology, history, drama and music, which includes the use of assessment to guide teaching and curriculum planning. Assessment in the formal teaching of ICT is very good. Weaknesses in assessment can be exemplified by lack of adequate use of assessment to inform planning for progression, and by assessment being insufficiently focused.

58. Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and well documented. Statements of educational need are in place and reviewed annually. Individual education plans are usually well targeted and reviewed on a termly basis. The school involves parents and pupils as far as possible in the setting of targets and in monitoring progress.

59. The school is meeting statutory requirements for reporting pupils' assessments at the end of Year 9, but reports to parents generally vary in terms of their usefulness and the clarity of information that they provide. Whilst some reports provide levels of attainment, teachers' comments refer mainly to effort and behaviour rather than progress or achievement. The reports do not always provide a precise indication of a pupil's subject strengths and weaknesses, nor what needs to be done in order to improve the standard of work.

60. Monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development is very good. The system's most effective asset is the teachers' close knowledge of the pupil's personal strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge accumulates through close relationships with the primary schools, running summer schools, participation of pupils in extra curricular activities, trips and residential visits, initiatives the pupils take and offices they hold. In addition, the teachers check individual pupil progress with the heads of year responsible for monitoring the personal progress of pupils in their year groups. The heads of year meet regularly with their form tutors and together they devise supportive action plans for individuals. Some thirty teachers mentor several Year 11 pupils each. The pupils acknowledge the effort staff make to improve their work and attitudes and the significant boost this support adds to their self-confidence and their ultimate achievement.

61. The special education needs co-ordinator provides very good leadership. Special needs assistants are well supported and relationships with external agencies such as the school psychological service work constructively for the benefit of pupils. The register of pupils with special educational needs is well maintained and used informatively for teaching colleagues. Individual Educational Plans appropriately reflect the requirements of statements, and anticipate forthcoming changes to the Code of Practice. The lack of a forum for teachers representing departments to meet with the special educational needs co-ordinator, however, limits the full extent of the consistency of provision which the school could achieve. Annual review arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are efficient and involve parents and pupils well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. The parents have very high opinion of the school. In addition to their positive responses it is evident from the number of pre-inspection questionnaires returned: almost two-thirds of the families responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very high proportion for secondary schools. Overall, in excess of nine in ten of the replies were complimentary about the school. The concerns that emerged were at low frequency and related to the amount of work done at home and being kept informed about how their children were getting on. The inspectors agree with the positive views. They judge the use of homework is effective and although there is room for improvement, the school makes good effort to inform parents about how their children are getting on. Almost all parents were very supportive of the school at the pre-inspection parents' meeting.

63. The school has good links with the parents. They receive information about the school through the school brochure, the governors' annual report to parents, a guide booklet for parents whose children are new to the school, newsletters and notices. These are packed with high quality information. The Student Planner & Homework Diary is used regularly to help to organise the pupils' work and for parents to see what their children are expected to do. It is not used much, however, for communication between parents and teachers and tutors. There is at least one parents' evening for each year group and over nine out of ten parents attend these. The school makes contact with those parents who do not attend and is generally able to speak to them about their children, too. There are additional parents meetings in Years 9, 10 and 11 for specific reasons, for example work

experience. Parents are able to speak to the subject teachers and form tutors about their children. In addition, some of the older pupils attend the parents' evenings and the parents are able to talk to them about their experiences of school, choosing subjects and other issues as well. Furthermore, the school invites parents to come to school if there is concern and also, to contact the school if they have worries. Parents receive an interim report about their children's progress and a more complete full report. Whilst there is some useful information in the full reports they have several deficiencies: the comments intended to provide information about the pupil's attainment are mainly description of attitudes and attributes and not what the pupil knows, understands and can do; no comparative indication of the National Curriculum level the pupil is working at; there are no specific targets or pupil's evaluation of his or her performance.

64. Parents and staff support the Parents Staff Association very well and the Association plays an important part in the school's life. It arranges social events and contributes to school funds for educational purposes and for improving the school's facilities. Network installation in one of the rooms was financed by the Parents Staff Association. It is also a forum to discuss informally emerging issues and future plans. Though the school consults parents about some of its decisions, for example sex education, and the school informs parents about its plans, it has not yet established a formal consultation mechanism for most main decisions, for example, the curriculum generally or major spending. The parents' most significant contribution to the work of the school is their very strong support of the school's aims and practices, and in particular, the personal development of their children. Parents almost unanimously stated that their children become more mature and responsible, and that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve his or her best. Other examples of the involvement of parents are: mock interviews for Year 11, refereeing matches, going on field trips with classes. The school uses the parents' support effectively.

65. The good links with the parents, noted in the last inspection report, have been maintained and make a positive contribution to academic progress and personal development of the pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school. He ensures clear educational direction. There is a commitment to self-evaluation and an investment in the development of the staff. The school has a strong senior management team which has a clear emphasis on improving learning for pupils, based upon a good understanding of what constitutes good teaching. Senior managers are aware of their responsibility to promote high standards of pupil achievement and to support middle managers and teaching staff in achieving targets for improvement. Each member of the senior management team is a team leader for performance management. The commitment to high achievement is complemented by a desire to ensure appropriate personal development for all pupils. The very strong ethos of the school reflects to a very high degree the school's aims and values in its work.

67. The headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to ensure continued improvement. The School Development Plan provides an effective structure for identifying school priorities and how these will be addressed. The plan is reviewed twice yearly with the Governors' Curriculum Committee and comprehensive termly reports contain views of progress towards the school's targets. Significant curriculum developments have been identified and are being addressed, including the development of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. It has been expanded to include vocational courses such as the Key Skills course and GNVQ courses in engineering and leisure and tourism, making it more relevant to pupils across the whole ability range.

68. All teachers now have performance targets, and common procedures have been agreed for monitoring and review. A programme of lesson observation by team leaders began in the summer term 2001, building on formal lesson observations carried out by the headteacher in 2000 and 2001. Whilst there is a strong commitment to using performance management as the vehicle for providing coherence to the monitoring and evaluation procedures in the school, it has yet to be developed fully. The structures are now in place, and greater rigour now needs to be applied in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the policy.

69. Overall, the leadership and management of subjects is good. Where it is very good, for example, in design and technology and history, there is clear vision of what has to be done to further improve, monitoring of the work of the department is systematic, documentation is very detailed and schemes of work are effective, and the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance is good. There is clear direction for the department and frequent consultation with colleagues. The previous inspection report indicated that monitoring the work in departments as a means of raising standards was being used more effectively in some departments than others. While plans have been developed for monitoring, evaluation and the development of teaching, there is a need for more formal and systematic monitoring by managers at all levels to ensure consistency of practice across all areas of the school.

70. Statutory targets for pupil performance have been set, and to date, exceeded. These targets are kept under review with officers of the LEA and revised appropriately in the light of success to date. The school's ability to set whole school targets is increasingly informed by the development of target setting for individuals and groups of pupils.

71. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The governing body is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities with the exception of the statutory requirements relating to the provision of ICT. The governors' committee structure is used effectively to contribute to the development and monitoring of school policies, such as policies for performance management and special educational needs. Governors are well informed about developments in the school through the headteachers' reports and through visiting presentations by heads of department and other senior staff. They make an important contribution to determining and supporting priorities in the school development plan, and are effective in monitoring the school's finances.

72. The school is operating a deficit budget. The expansion of the school has meant that an agreed overspend inherited in 1996 has continued to 2001 in spite of efforts to alleviate it. The unit costs per pupil are very high in comparison with similar schools. A spending plan for 2001/02 has been designed to reduce the deficit substantially, and the school continues to work closely with the local authority's LMS unit. Arrangements for financial management are secure, and the issues raised in the recent auditor's report have been attended to. The school's policy on the Management and Control of Finances is currently being reviewed to take account of Best Value Principles. The school makes good use of all grants and additional funding, and links decisions on spending to educational priorities to good effect.

73. The school has a well-established staff with many long serving members who are committed to raising standards. There have been no significant difficulties in the recruitment of specialist teachers and the turnover of staff is low. Teachers are well qualified and deployed effectively, particularly in science where deployment is good in relation to the curriculum offered. The demands of the curriculum are being well met except in the area of ICT, where there are insufficient staff to teach it and co-ordinate it across the curriculum. The daily administration by office staff is good. The site manager and cleaning staff make a strong contribution to the smooth running of the school and

ensure good upkeep of school buildings. The quality of technical support is good in the areas where it is provided and contributes significantly to the quality and effectiveness of students learning. In design and technology the time allotted for technical support is insufficient. A trained counsellor supports pastoral work effectively.

74. Staff training and professional development needs are well organised and well managed by a senior member of staff. They are largely, though not exclusively, linked to the school's development plan and to national and local initiatives that have a direct impact on teaching and learning, and the school's programme for continuing professional development is closely linked to the teachers' performance management targets. Appropriate training has been provided for non-teaching staff. Newly qualified and newly appointed teachers are well supported by a comprehensive induction programme, and the Governor's Staffing Committee is involved in the observation of new teachers.

75. Rising numbers continue to put pressure on the accommodation of the school. Since the last inspection three new temporary classrooms have been provided which have alleviated problems in some curriculum areas, and provision is good or better in English, modern foreign languages and physical education. However it is unsatisfactory in history, geography, art and music, where the rooms are too small for the number of students in some teaching groups, and storage is limited. This restricts practical activities and affects the teaching of the curriculum. The amount of specialist accommodation is inadequate in music. When two classes are timetabled simultaneously; one has to be taught in the hall or a classroom. Entrance to geography and art classrooms is through other classrooms, which results in distraction and disturbance. The accommodation is well maintained, but there are presently limited facilities for the disabled.

76. The provision of resources to teach the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Resources are good in English, modern languages, drama and music and are very good in physical education. They are unsatisfactory in science, where there is limited general equipment and the department relies on the hard work of the two technicians to improvise. Information and communication technology resources are adequate for teaching the subject but they are not adequate for the use of ICT across the curriculum and in the library. The provision of hardware and software is inadequate in a significant number of curriculum areas, including mathematics, history, art, music and modern foreign languages. In design and technology, there is no computer-aided design. The library is well organised and as there is no full-time librarian, it is run by students. Within it, the information technology systems are outdated and fail to support independent learning adequately.

COMMUNITY LINKS

77. The school's links with the local community are outstanding. In June 2000 St Joseph's achieved the School Curriculum Award for the quality of its community links. The school aims to ensure that it is at the heart of the community and that the community is at the heart of the school. Pupils are offered a curriculum which uses the community as a resource to enrich teaching and learning, with individuals and groups involved in the school complementing and enhancing the knowledge and expertise of the teaching staff.

78. Whole school commitment to strong and active community links are well reflected in the school development plan. Pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to enrich their learning. For example, in Year 8, pupils have the opportunity to work shadow, Year 10 pupils are involved in an Industry Awareness Workshop, and Year 11 pupils engage in work experience and are involved in mock interviews as preparation for the world of work. The planning and delivery of each activity involves a wide range of local companies, who contribute at the planning and evaluation stages. Such activities ensure that all pupils experience a range of work skills.

79. The school's involvement with the community enhances the quality of teaching and learning. For example, links with the local newspaper, The Bolton Evening News, has led to a successful newspaper reading scheme and a newsroom simulation for Year 10. Through the Bolton Training Group, a good working relationship has been established with an

engineering firm and real design problems have been effectively incorporated into the school's design and technology curriculum. The links with Amnesty International have a positive impact on the social and moral development of pupils, through, for example, the raising and debating of real life issues.

80. Pupils develop self-confidence and esteem through the school's community programme. Subject departments are increasingly involved with the community. English and music, for example, provide opportunities for public performances locally and throughout the North West. A successful Key Skills programme, which has links with Youth Services, helps to create a more positive attitude to school and work. The link with a management consultancy has made possible the 'Advance' programme, offered to a group of Year 9 pupils who are disaffected. The experience has been successful in motivating them and developing them socially.

81. The interaction between the school and the community is two way, with each influencing the other. Life issues are at the heart of the pastoral curriculum and the school seizes every opportunity to utilise the skills and energies of the pupils in order to make a difference to the lives of others. Pupils enhance their studies by working with Firwood Special School in Years 10 and 11, and participate in the St Vincent de Paul sponsored Help in the Community project for disadvantaged groups.

82. Parents are seen as an essential part of the school community, and their skills are utilised to very good effect as rugby and football coaches, referees and Duke of Edinburgh Award Leaders.

83. Sporting links are very strong and effective. The school has a close working relationship with Horwich RMI Athletics, local soccer and Rugby League clubs. Bolton Wanderers FC supports a mentoring scheme for pupils. In 2000, the school successfully achieved Sports College status. This has enabled the school to further develop the already extensive and excellent curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities for all pupils, and has ensured that links with the community can be further enhanced.

84. Links with other schools was one of the most successful aspects of the work of the school in 2000/2001 as new partnerships were formed with local primary schools not traditionally associated with St Joseph's. Some of the activities consisted of coaching competitions in extra-curricular time, curriculum collaboration, special events, INSET for physical education co-ordinators, and induction for associated primary schools with sporting opportunities added.

85. The community links programme co-ordinator is very effective in his management of the programme. All staff involved are enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that links are developed and that pupils benefit as a result. The excellent provision that the school makes for pupils has a significant impact on their attitudes and learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. The school has significantly more strengths than weaknesses. However, in order to maintain the momentum of continuous improvement the school should now:

- Ensure that the statutory requirements for Information and communication technology are met at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
(Paragraphs: 43, 71, 73, 156, 158)
- Ensure that ICT is used across all subjects of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
(Paragraphs: 43, 73, 76, 102, 129, 138, 144, 153, 156, 160,161, 169, 174)
- Further develop systematic monitoring and evaluation at all levels of management to ensure that:
(Paragraphs: 36, 55, 57, 59, 68, 69, 96, 107, 119, 127, 129, 145, 181, 184, 185)
 - * marking and assessment are used consistently to make pupils aware of strengths and weaknesses in their work and what they need to do to improve;
 - * teaching and learning in all situations are having an effective impact on standards and pupil progress;
 - * school policies are implemented consistently.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	132
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	11	41	60	21	0	0	0
Percentage	8	31	45	16	0	0	0

The table gives the number and per centage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these per centages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] per centage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7–Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	829
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	56

Special educational needs	Y7–Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	136

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	92.6	School data	0.4
National comparative data	91.3	National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	82	71	153

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	59	68	69
	Girls	60	52	52
	Total	119	120	121
Per centage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	78 (76)	78 (79)	79 (74)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Per centage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (30)	59 (49)	45 (35)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	53	67	70
	Girls	55	50	59
	Total	108	117	129
Per centage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	71 (82)	77 (76)	85 (84)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Per centage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (41)	48 (44)	51 (42)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Per centages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	65	80	145

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	32	61	65
	Girls	52	74	78
	Total	84	135	143
Per centage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	58 (62)	93 (97)	99 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

Per centages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43
	National	38.4

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	820
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	33	2
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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6:1

Education support staff:

Y7–Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	216

Deployment of teachers:

Y7–Y11

Per centage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.2
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Average teaching group size:

Y7–Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	24.3
Key Stage 4	19.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	2083331.00
Total expenditure	2115284.00
Expenditure per pupil	2552.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-87576.00
Balance carried forward to next year	-88233.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

670
405

Per centage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	45	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	41	6	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	39	3	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	55	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	48	48	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	43	10	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	30	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	22	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	46	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	69	28	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	38	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	27	3	0	2

Other issues raised by parents

There was an expression of concern about the arrangements for setting of pupils by ability in selected subjects.

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

ENGLISH

87. Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and often excellent.
- High standards of attainment and achievement.
- Attitudes and behaviour are excellent in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils should be taught to plan, draft, redraft and proof-read their work using ICT.
- Schemes of work should be further developed to indicate the content to be taught, the teaching and learning styles to be adopted, the resources to be used, and the range of work to be assessed.

88. The 2000 GCSE results in English and English literature were significantly higher than results nationally for both average points and for the proportion of higher grades, A* to C. Over the last three years, average points have remained stable. During the same period, results for both boys and girls exceeded the national average. In 2001, results were much the same, although the number of pupils gaining A* and A grades at English rose significantly. Girls achieved higher standards than boys in English. Boys achieved higher standards than girls in English literature.

89. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2000, results in English were well above the national average. Results were above the average for similar schools. The performance of both boys and girls, over the three years from 1998 to 2000, exceeded the national average. The average points score shows that boys' results exceeded the national average by a greater amount than the girls' results. In 2001, there was a further rise in the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or above in the National Curriculum tests.

90. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment in English is in line with the standard expected nationally. By the age of fourteen, standards in the work seen were well above those expected. Pupils are capable speakers and listeners, and their responses to the texts they read are good. They make careful and astute analyses of plot and relationships in novels, short stories and plays, basing their judgements on what characters do and say. For example, after group readings of *Tony Kytes – The Arch Deceiver*, Year 10 pupils were able to construct a detailed picture of the central character. Pupils write in a range of styles in a convincing and appealing manner. For example, Year 8 pupils were able to build up 'autumn' word banks to inform first drafts of their poems before imposing discipline and structure. Handwriting is generally good. Most pupils are able to spell monosyllabic and common polysyllabic words accurately. In lessons there is a strong emphasis on the need to improve punctuation and spelling. By the age of 14, all pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress.

91. By the age of 16 pupils achieve standards well above those expected. Standards in speaking and listening are good. The majority of boys and girls listen attentively. They are keen to answer questions. Where pupils are well prepared for discussions, they can make sophisticated contributions and maintain discussion at a high level.

92. Reading standards are good. By the age of sixteen, a majority of pupils are able to read aloud with confidence, fluency and expression. Lower-attaining pupils are encouraged to improve the quality of their reading aloud. During a shared reading and

discussion of *Of Mice and Men*, Year 10 pupils showed an understanding of plot and central characters. They were able to relate personal behaviour and character traits to the behaviour of characters in the text. Standards in writing are good, although insufficient use is made of information and communications technology when drafting. Pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and produce an interesting range of extended writing. Good oral work prior to writing often helps pupils to write more extensively. For example, Year 10 pupils discussed a variety of approaches prior to drafting presentations for their Great Balloon Debate. Most pupils are able to improve the fluency and accuracy of their writing with re-drafting. Handwriting is generally good. As a result of the emphasis given to these features in lessons, most pupils spell and punctuate accurately, well supported by the fact that in lessons there is a strong emphasis on improving punctuation and spelling.

93. Since the previous inspection there have been some improvements. The overall standards achieved by pupils by the ages of fourteen and sixteen have risen. Attainment in the National Curriculum assessments at age 14 is well above the national average. Results in GCSE are above the national average. The quality of teaching is good and often excellent. The English department has raised standards by contributing to initiatives to raise the achievement of boys.

94. Teaching is good at each stage, and is often excellent. All of the teachers have an excellent knowledge of both language and literature. The majority of lessons are well managed at each key stage. The overall effectiveness of teachers' planning is very good, particularly the planning for individual lessons and sequences of lessons. There is very good use of constructive oral comments in lessons to help pupils to improve. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment is good for all groups. Homework is used very well. Throughout the school, well-targeted work, combined with high expectations of learning and behaviour, result in a majority of pupils making good progress. By the ages of fourteen and sixteen, the progress made by lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs is good.

95. The attitudes to learning of the majority of boys and girls are excellent in each stage. Most pupils are very well motivated. Teachers' excellent management of behaviour encourages pupils to co-operate, so that the behaviour of most pupils is excellent.

96. The leadership and management in the department are satisfactory. The subject makes a significant contribution to the education of all pupils in the school and the leadership and management in the department are satisfactory, overall. There are, however, some shortcomings. The department needs a clearer sense of direction. The arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning are not effective. Documentation is embryonic and unfocused. Schemes of work do not indicate the content to be taught. They do not identify the range of learning and teaching styles to be adopted, the resources to be used, and the nature of work to be assessed. Resources for teaching, books in particular, are plentiful and well cared for. However, the lack of computers in the department for both pupils and staff and limited access to central ICT resources is a weakness and limits pupils' drafting experience. It also restricts the development of the good practice seen, for example, in word-processed GCSE coursework. Accommodation for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good.

MATHEMATICS

97. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is very good.

Strengths

- Standards at ages 14 and 16 are well above average.
- The quality of teaching is very good with some outstanding features.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Information and Communications Technology is not used fully to support teaching.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has yet to be fully implemented.

98. In 2000, National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above that of schools nationally, and when compared with similar schools. The attainment of boys was similar to that of girls. The results in mathematics were below those for science but better than those for English. Since the last inspection, the trend has been in line with the national trend. Teacher assessments were in line with the test results. In relation to pupils' attainment on entry to the school, these results represent above average progress and achievement. Results for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show a further improvement.

99. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Year 9, the standards of all pupils are very good with little difference between boys and girls. Higher-attaining pupils show confidence in the use of trigonometric functions such as sine and cosine and can solve simultaneous and quadratic equations using graphical means. Lower-attaining pupils, are less confident in their understanding of mathematics but can, nevertheless, draw frequency curves accurately and use Pythagoras theorem. Achievement, overall, based upon attainment on entry, is above average.

100. In 2000, the results of examinations for GCSE were well above average, for both boys and girls, compared with national averages. The number of grades achieved at the highest levels, A* and A, was also well above average compared with the national average. Compared with similar schools, these results were average. The performance of boys was similar to that of girls. The results in 2000 are better than those achieved in 1999. Results for the examinations held in 2001 show a further improvement with 63.3 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades. The trend since the previous inspection is in line with the national trend. Mathematics results at GCSE were not as good as those for English or for science. Comparison between the standards attained at the end of Year 9 with the GCSE results at the end of Year 11, shows that the results, overall, represent satisfactory progress and achievement through Years 10 and 11.

101. Since current year 11 pupils were participating in work experience out of school, it was not possible to obtain direct evidence of the work of these pupils. Judgements have, therefore, been based upon evidence obtained from the work of pupils and lesson observations in Year 10 together with evidence from the examination of coursework produced by pupils in Year 11, during the academic year which ended in July 2001. This evidence shows that standards of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are, overall, well above national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 10 are confident in the use of mathematical indices and can, for example, explain why $x^0 = 1$. Lower-attaining pupils are confident in the manipulation of numbers, being able to determine highest common factors and lowest common multiples. The examination of work done indicates that progress through Years 10 and 11, including pupils with special educational needs, is good.

102. From work seen during the inspection, it is clear that all attainment targets are well covered and that mathematical investigations are well integrated into the teaching program. The standard of literacy is, overall, in line with expectations. Higher-attaining pupils cope fairly well with extended writing and use mathematical terms with confidence. Spelling is good. Lower-attaining pupils are less confident and tend to be more restricted in the range and extent of their written work, but the use of mathematical terms and spelling are also good. Pupils, throughout the school, speak with confidence and understanding and are able to describe and discuss their work with a good degree of accuracy. Even though there were no direct observations made of pupils using ICT, there were several good examples of its use, such as spreadsheets and word processing, in their work. However, the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, whilst being included within the normal schemes of work, is limited in practice. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attainment, attitudes and progress, but they provide neither focused, subject specific, strengths and weaknesses in each attainment target nor targets for improvement.

103. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is very good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed. In all but one lesson, teaching was good or better, and in one lesson teaching was excellent. In Years 10 and 11 teaching observed was at least good in all lessons, and in one lesson it was very good. Teachers make use of their very good subject knowledge in providing very effective explanations and in asking questions which challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Even though lesson objectives are not always clearly explained, lessons are on the whole well planned. Classroom management and organisation are effective and the brisk pace of lessons matches the needs and tasks of pupils. Homework is given, when appropriate, which either consolidates or extends classwork. Teachers manage pupils very well and time is rarely wasted during lessons. A few lessons, however, are over directed and there is insufficient opportunity provided for independent learning. Whilst books are always marked and comments are often made, marking rarely indicates the level at which pupils have performed, nor does it always indicate how pupils can improve.

104. Learning overall is very good. The identification of appropriate and challenging learning objectives coupled with very good support for pupils' learning, enables all pupils, throughout the school, to make good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. Teachers always have high expectations of pupils, who are enthusiastic, work hard and at a good pace. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils work well independently and in groups, think out problems for themselves and concentrate hard. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

105. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to mathematics are both very good. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are always very good and often excellent. Pupils listen very well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities and show interest and enjoyment. Pupils have the confidence to ask questions and to discuss mathematical concepts with their teachers and with other pupils. This has a very positive effect upon performance.

106. The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for higher-attaining pupils also includes the option to take statistics as an additional GCSE examination. The provision for all pupils, including those with special educational needs is good and matches their individual needs and abilities. This has a positive effect upon standards. The organisation of the scheme of work and the arrangement of pupils into groups according to individual attainment also supports learning and leads to increased standards.

107. Leadership in the mathematics department is good. The department is led by a dedicated head of department who is supported by a good team of teachers. Development planning, which is in line with school development planning, is effective and manageable, but planning for long-term departmental development which includes short, medium and longer term targets, costings and focused success criteria, has yet to be carried out. Procedures for assessment, whilst being satisfactory overall, do not include a detailed overview of the attainment of the progress of all pupils in each attainment target. This has been recognised and progress is being made in the development of a system for regular monitoring of pupils throughout the school. Individual teachers keep satisfactory records of pupils' progress and these are used to identify underachievement and to guide future teaching. However, although some analysis of test results does take place, assessment is not yet fully used as a means of tracking the progress of pupils nor as a means of identifying overall strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. Even though plans have been developed for monitoring the quality of teaching by lesson observations, these have yet to be fully implemented. Nevertheless, informal monitoring and the dissemination of good practice does take place.

108. The number of teachers for a school of this size is unsatisfactory. Although teachers are deployed effectively, the shortage of one full time specialist teacher results in some groups being taught by non-specialists, or by more than one teacher during the school week. This adversely affects continuity. It also has the effect of increasing the size of some teaching groups, which reduces the effectiveness of teachers. Although some rooms are small, accommodation is adequate, but it does not provide the access facilities which would be necessary to provide for pupils with mobility difficulties. Resources, in terms of books are good, although the department is in urgent need of graphical calculators and more computer hardware.

109. The mathematics department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Test and examination results have improved, and teaching, described as being sound at the time of the previous inspection, is now very good. With improved monitoring of pupils' progress through more focused assessment and improved development planning, the capacity for departmental improvement is good.

110. The National Numeracy Strategy, within the mathematics department, is in place and is being used effectively. The use, by pupils, of numeracy skills, in subjects other than mathematics, is good and in some subject areas, such as science and design technology it is very good. However the school has yet to develop an overall numeracy policy. As a result, the application of numeracy, including the knowledge of number operations and familiarity with the ways in which numerical information is gathered and presented, is inconsistent.

SCIENCE

111. Overall, the quality of provision in science is very good.

Strengths

- Standards at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are well above average at age 14 and 16.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils significantly supports their progress.
- There is a shared commitment to succeed among teachers and technicians.

Areas for improvement

- Marking is insufficiently helpful and constructive.
- Monitoring of pupils' performance is not leading to individual targets that are focused on learning goals.
- A shortage of day-to-day equipment and Key Stage 4 text books.

112. Standards in science are very good. Pupils' attainment in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2000, as measured by average point scores, was well above average when compared with all schools and above average when compared with similar schools. Results in the more recent tests of 2001 have been similar. Since the last report, attainment has risen progressively faster when compared with the national trend. The performance of boys has been consistently better than that of girls, but over the past four years this difference has become more significant.

113. In the 2000 GCSE examinations for dual award science, all pupils entered gained grades A* - G whilst the proportion gaining the higher grades A* - C was well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. There has been a steady improvement since the last inspection and the results in 2001 show an even more significant rise in the proportion of higher grades. Until 2000, girls outperformed the boys but in the most recent examination the boy's results were better. In the separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics, almost all pupils entered gained grades A* - C and in single award science, almost all those entered gained grades D - G. Pupils taking the certificate achievement in science gain high awards.

114. Standards of work seen in both key stages are well above average and reflect the results seen in national tests and examinations. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. For example, more able pupils discuss cell structure with accuracy, and have a good grasp of the process of food manufacture in plants. They understand how to extend the use of the ammeter in physics, and in chemistry relate the structure of materials to the way they behave. Pupils of lower prior attainment have less depth of knowledge, but recognise the sun as an energy provider and can build up simple food chains. They understand that there are different types of electrical circuits and that some metals are more reactive than others. Pupils have good practical skills and their investigative skills of predicting and planning are generally well developed. Work is well presented, and notably so amongst pupils with lower ability. Literacy skills are good; most pupils speak confidently and write coherently.

115. Work seen from Year 10 indicates that pupils taking the separate sciences extend their range and depth of understanding considerably. For example, in physics they utilise their numeracy skills well in a wide variety of contexts, and in biology develop advanced concepts of ecology. Dual award pupils build on the skills they gained during Years 7 to 9. For instance, they do an in-depth study of metals and extend their understanding of the chemistry of carbon compounds. In the certificate of achievement course, standards of knowledge and understanding are such that almost all are able to obtain a grade in single award GCSE.

116. Pupils' progress throughout the school is very good. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average and from Years 7 to 9 they achieve very well indeed. Careful regrouping of pupils in Year 9 ensures that pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They receive appropriate teaching and follow a curriculum which is more suited to their needs and which provides good preparation for the certificate course in Years 10 and 11. The remaining pupils gain from specialist teaching that effectively links their studies with the work that follows in Year 10. In Years 10 and 11 very good progress continues and is again supported by the effective grouping of pupils and the wide range of available certification. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well on a course appropriately matched to their abilities.

117. Teaching in the department is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and three quarters is better than satisfactory. Some teaching is excellent. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject material is very good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It leads to well-planned, well-structured lessons in which teaching is often very rigorous. Expectations are generally very high and pupils are given the opportunity to think for themselves. In one very good Year 8 lesson on forces, for example, pupils were arranged in small groups to design a structure which would not only withstand weight but which would also be economically viable. They rose to the challenge well, exploring ideas and developing good organisational skills. In all lessons, relationships are very good and pupils are managed well. Very good discipline facilitates very good use of time. Lessons begin promptly and a brisk pace almost always ensues till the end. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods and resources that motivate pupils and make learning enjoyable. In one excellent Year 9 lesson on feeding relationships, very good use of the school's pond, sensing equipment, computer-aided microscopy and handouts, together with very good technical support, helped to create an exciting atmosphere of learning. A small prayer, reminding pupils that the organisms they had seen were all God's creatures, reflected the caring ethos of teaching in this department. The use of ICT is being developed very effectively within the day-to-day teaching. Homework is set regularly but, with some notable exceptions in Year 9, is not always sufficiently challenging and there are missed opportunities to address the whole ability range, especially in classes of mixed prior attainment. Marking rewards effort and achievement, but rarely indicates what pupils need to do to improve. Technical support in science is excellent and very much valued by teachers.

118. Throughout all year groups and across the ability range, the very positive attitudes of pupils and their very good behaviour contribute very significantly to learning. They co-operate willingly with teachers, showing interest and sustaining concentration. Outside the classroom, the success of the conservation group is a credit to pupils' enthusiasm and the teacher's commitment. The areas they have developed provide not only educational opportunities for those involved, but also invaluable learning resources for others.

119. Leadership and management of the department are good. The teaching staff form a strong enthusiastic team that share ideas and a commitment to succeed. Responsibility for subject areas is delegated well and teachers are deployed effectively, almost always teaching within their specialised areas. The head of department rightly recognises the need for more formalised monitoring of teachers and pupils work to ensure consistency. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are very good, but the department needs to continue its development of a monitoring system to ensure that pupils are more aware of their learning and what they must do to raise their attainment. There is shortage of storage space, especially within the preparation area and a shortage of general science equipment. More specialised equipment is required to enable teachers to continue the development of ICT within the curriculum.

120. Since the last inspection, the department has moved forwards on a number of fronts. There have been significant improvements in standards throughout the school.

More independent learning has been introduced and the use of ICT is much improved. The certificate of achievement and single award science course have been developed successfully for pupils for whom dual award is unsuitable, and good links with feeder schools have been established. The refurbishment of a second laboratory has gone some way to improving accommodation.

ART AND DESIGN

121. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils learn well within the art lessons and make good progress over their time in school.
- Pupils' attitude and behaviour are good.

Areas for improvement

- To build on the ethos of the subject and raise its profile within the school and in the community.
- To establish an assessment system which is used to influence planning.
- Insufficient ICT resources to enable effective use in lessons.

122. Standards in art and design seen during the inspection show that students' attainment by the age of fourteen is slightly above the standard expected nationally. This is reflected in the National Curriculum teacher assessments of 2001. Girls perform better at this level than boys. At the age of sixteen, the level of attainment is high. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in GCSE examinations has been well above the national average for the last three years and was particularly high in 2001. However the number of students entered is low and too small for a reliable statistical comparison to be made with national results.

123. By Year 9, students demonstrate an above-average level of knowledge, skills and understanding. They understand concepts and processes and apply technical skills very competently. Sketch books demonstrate well developed observational and analytical skills across all abilities. Students are confident in art and design activities and show a good understanding of visual expression. They are familiar with art vocabulary and use it appropriately. Year 9 students working on a project on figurative art discussed the effect of war and its influence on artists such as Henry Moore, with specific reference to his drawings of people in the underground during the Blitz. Media are used appropriately and students demonstrated a sound understanding of three-dimensional techniques when producing papier-mache reliefs of designs based on themes such as South American and Egyptian art. The achievement of students across all abilities in Year 7 - 9 is good. Students arrive in Year 7 with a wide range of attainment, which is overall in line with national standards and by Year 9 are achieving at levels that are above average. They learn quickly because the quality of teaching is good. Students with special educational needs demonstrate a confidence in what they are doing and produce work at least in line with their ability and often above.

124. Standards reached by students in Year 11 are overall above the national average. Due to work experience only Year 10 classes were observed. Standards for Year 11 were judged by scrutiny of their folders. In lessons, students demonstrated a good understanding of the formal elements of composition and competently used different techniques, such as using a vertical emphasis to lead the eye around the painting. Achievement is good across all abilities. Students interpret whole class themes and select

and use material confidently. In Year 11 they take more responsibility for their own work. They carry out a range of

experiments before selecting final ideas and study past and contemporary art whilst developing their own preferred style. Folders demonstrated a good ability to explore, interpret and analyse. For example, a student produced high quality work when using the work of Braque and Picasso to produce a mixed media abstract still life

125. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. A three dimensional specialist has been appointed and the breadth and balance of the curriculum has been improved and is now meeting the National Curriculum requirements. However classrooms are small and the accommodation is difficult to organise for three-dimensional work. This combined with the lack of storage space for work and ceramics equipment, has an adverse impact on the quantity of provision.

126. The overall quality of teaching is good. Projects are well-planned, using interesting resources, and include a range of activities, which lead to developing ideas and increased understanding. and has a positive impact on learning. Clear direction with suitable tasks ensured clear progression in the drawing skills of Year 7, which had improved since the beginning of term. In a lesson on natural form, challenging questions made pupils think about shape and the effect of the surface that the stones they were drawing were laid on. This stretched higher attaining pupils to consider how form is created and to incorporate the tones of the background into their work.

127. Homework, arising from projects, is set at the beginning of term and is used effectively to consolidate analytical skills. It could also be used to extend pupils understanding and research of artists. Specialised vocabulary is built into projects and literacy skills are well supported. Teachers demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. For example, in Year 10, a lesson was introduced with a comparison between the Renaissance and Impressionist approach to the painting of landscapes. Pupils gained a good understanding of the effect of different styles of artists and how it affected the mood of the painting. This was supported by practical demonstration of watercolour techniques, which gave pupils a clear direction on how to apply tones to create atmosphere and distance. Teachers give a lot of individual support to students and there is good quality dialogue on the evaluation of work during lessons but formal marking is underused. Pupils are not always clear of what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.

128. Attitudes and behaviour within the department are good. Pupils respond well to the effective teaching, enjoy art and want to learn. Teachers manage students well and their high expectations of behaviour create a positive working atmosphere. The positive attitude of the students contributes significantly to the progress and achievement in all years. Pupils listen well and answer questions with enthusiasm when encouraged to do so. This is a strength currently underused by staff. In Year 10, pupils show a high level of engagement and frequently work in near silence whilst engrossed in what they were doing. Sketch books and theory books are well kept.

129. Documentation gives good guidance to staff; it details structured and progressive schemes of work. There are statements on differentiation but it is not built into schemes of work. However a good initiative is in place for gifted and talented pupils, whereby they attend extra-curricular classes to study for GCSE in Year 9 and are entered in Year 10. Assessment structures are in place but they are overcomplicated and are not functioning effectively. Due to this, they are not being used to inform planning. The department should look to simplified systems, which involve pupils in their own assessment and encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. The limited resources of hardware and appropriate software within the department restrict the use of ICT.

130. The overall leadership and management of the department is satisfactory. Department documentation is good with schemes of work well structured to ensure continuity and progression. However, there is a need to raise the profile of the subject within the school and within the community and actively promote the good standards it is achieving.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

131. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is very good.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve good results overall, and very good results at GCSE
- The quality of teaching is very good
- The department is very effective and is well led and managed

Areas for improvement

- Information and Communications Technology resources are insufficient to allow for effective use to be made by pupils in all the focus areas

132. At the end of Year 9 pupils attain well above average in comparison with national expectations. The standards of work of current pupils are also well above average and exceed the levels set by the National Curriculum and GCSE examination requirements. In Year 9, pupils know and understand the design process thoroughly. They show high levels of skill in expressing and evaluating their work. The above average pupils on the GCSE graphic products course are confident in the application of research and analysis to product design. The lesson structure and the use of key-word prompts assists those with special educational needs to achieve good standards in all the focus areas. There is very little difference between boys and girls in the good standards of work at the end of Year 9.

133. In the 2000 GCSE examinations in electronics, food technology, graphic products and resistant materials the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was well above average and the proportion gaining grades A* to G was above average. The overall results of boys and girls were similar, though the boys performed slightly better in respect of the higher grades. The results for the year 2001 confirm the same high levels of achievement although there are no national figures yet available for comparison.

134. Portfolios and products of the older pupils confirm very high standards and quality. The extensive and in-depth design work through to quality products of the above average pupils is consistently good in food technology, resistant materials, electronics, and graphic products. Whilst the portfolios of the below average pupils are not as extensive or as mature in their approach to the work, nevertheless, they show a satisfactory grasp of the subject. All pupils use literacy and numeracy skills effectively to attain high standards in their chosen focus areas. The use of information and communications technology is not as strong. The above-average pupils use ICT effectively in the presentation of their work.

135. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. Examination results at GCSE level have improved over time. Standards of teaching have improved consistently. Staffing is better matched to the needs of the specialist areas. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are now more helpful to teachers in their planning and assessment procedures. The department has a well-focused development plan in place, however it requires detailed costing. The time allocation for the subject has not changed for the better in Years 7 to 9 and development funding remains very low.

136. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their pupils well. Lessons are planned, structured and organised in such a way that pupils make good progress in their

learning. In Year 8, for example, the brisk pace, the searching questions and the variety of activities made a positive impact on the pupils' understanding of mechanisms and their different uses. Similarly in Year 7 food technology, the teacher's high level of subject expertise enabled all pupils to talk confidently about task analysis. They carried out sensory testing with enthusiasm using correctly the language of investigative work. Boys in the Year 10 GNVQ engineering course are constantly challenged to think about and arrive at solutions for example, in designing for special groups in society. The planned and designed support materials for this mainly below-average group are effective in extending their problem solving skills and the pupils consolidate their previous understanding of designing from Year 9.

137. Management of pupils is excellent in all focus areas. Pupils listen carefully and respond well to the use of constructive criticism of their work. The assessment of work from Years 7 to 11 provides pupils with an understanding of what to do to improve. They are well motivated and concentrate well in their lessons. In a Year 9 electronics lesson, pupils were keen to get involved in soldering and produced very high quality results. Pupils work safely. The exposition of knowledge and skills by the teachers provides very good models for pupils. Objectives for lessons are made clear to pupils and they act as a strong framework for learning. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in their learning and are very productive in their work. For them new learning takes place for example, in understanding the differences between thermoplastics and thermoplastic setting properties. This is as a result of the teacher pitching work at an appropriate level. The gifted and talented pupils make rapid progress in their learning. Portfolios and class work indicate extended research and analytical skills, high quality annotation of drawings, very good use of literacy and numeracy skills in general and good use of home computers to enhance the quality of their work. There is little difference between the progress in learning of boys and girls. The high expectations of all pupils make a significant impact on the consistent progress in the focus areas. However, in the very few instances where teaching is not at this very high level, the pace is slow and consequently pupils become restless and less productive.

138. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of what has to be done to further improve. Monitoring of the work of the department is systematic and makes a significant impact on standards achieved. The quality of technician support is good. Whilst accommodation is adequate, lack of storage space for major project work causes difficulties for both pupils and teachers. Requirements of the National Curriculum are being met. However, insufficient ICT resources mean that pupils do not have the required experience of computer-aided design and manufacture and systems and control.

GEOGRAPHY

139. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good

Strengths

- Very good standards at GCSE.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.
- The management of pupils in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Long term strategic management, monitoring and evaluation.
- Assessment that informs pupils of their progress and provides clear targets for improvement.
- Need to increase opportunities for the use of ICT.

140. In 2000, teachers assessed their pupils' standards at age 14 as above average. The standards shown in the work of pupils currently in Year 9 is also above average. Most pupils can describe a range of physical and human processes. They are beginning to recognise and explain patterns in these and can explain how features such as tourism can affect people in different ways. The best work shows ability to provide detailed explanations, making good reference to individual examples to illustrate general points. Where work is of a lower standard, it is often linked to failure to complete it.

141. Results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were well above the national average. The number of pupils achieving an A grade was well above average and, while no girls secured an A* grade, an above average percentage of boys did so. However, pupils did less well in geography than in most of their other subjects. There has been a consistent trend of improvement in the years since the last inspection and results for 2001 show that this has been maintained. During these years however, the numbers choosing to take the subject have steadily declined to a level where they are currently in line with the average for most schools. The standards in work samples of the pupils who are at the start of Year 11 are above average. The evidence from recent examination results indicates that they are likely to benefit strongly from the preparation that this year provides, to achieve results that match those of recent years. Assignments based on fieldwork in Grasmere show that pupils are able to carry out effectively investigations based upon valid geographical questions and issues, following appropriate sequences of enquiry and methods of recording their findings. The presentation of this work is of a generally high order, although most pupils are not yet strongly evaluating their own investigations. Pupils' written accounts of their work show good independence, initiative and understanding of the purpose of their investigations.

142. Achievement is good throughout the school. Attainment on entry to the school is in line with expectation and is above average by age 14. This improvement is maintained in years 10 and 11. Pupils with special education needs and the more able pupils make progress that is in line with that of other pupils. There is no significant variation between the achievement of boys and girls.

143. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages. Teachers are experienced and highly capable. They manage their pupils very well, with control that is strong, but not heavy handed. High expectations of how pupils should approach their learning are expressed clearly. For example, in Year 7 lessons there was sympathetic, but clear, guidance on how some pupils could improve the way in which they take responsibility for providing themselves with basic equipment for studying the subject. The importance of thinking like geographers when addressing issues was reinforced to pupils in a Year 8 lesson. As a result, pupils are well supported in developing a confident and appropriate approach to the subject. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to contribute their own knowledge and experience. The very good subject knowledge of teachers enables them to use pupils' responses to increase the depth of learning, as in a Year 9 lesson about tourism in Spain, when a pupil's observation about his own experiences in Blackpool developed into a discussion of similarities between outwardly different places. Fieldwork is frequently referred to and has a high relevance to the learning of the subject. This reinforces investigative skills. Homework generally develops classwork well and makes a good contribution to following lessons. This provides good continuity in learning. Nevertheless, some lessons still place too much emphasis on the textbook and associated worksheets, and work occasionally focuses on low-level tasks. Although teachers are good at identifying and supporting individual needs during lessons, and are beginning to provide differentiated work for those with special educational needs, there is insufficient systematic planning of work to challenge the more able. The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils contribute fully to their learning. They are very well behaved and listen carefully when instructions and explanations are being given. Their willingness to contribute answers and ideas in whole-class work, and to co-operate with each other in paired and group work, enables them to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by their teachers.

144. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, but with very good improvement in a major area. GCSE results have improved significantly from a situation where they had been below the national average. Resources have also been significantly improved, with better stocks of texts and video tapes, and departmentally produced guidance and task sheets for fieldwork are now having an impact. Teaching styles are becoming more varied, although there is a need for this to continue to develop. GCSE results indicate that higher-attaining pupils are coming closer to achieving their potential, but this is not yet being systematically planned for. The accommodation has not improved and continues to impede the ability of teachers to develop practical and group work. Although there is reference to the use of ICT in the department handbook, the subject continues to provide very few opportunities to use computers.

145. The department is led and managed satisfactorily. Day to day management is good, but while important improvements have taken place, strategic leadership and monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department needs to be more vigorous. Too much reliance is placed upon the capabilities of individual teachers. While assessment of pupils' work is regular and accurate, it does not consistently provide adequate guidance for pupils on their progress, or specific targets for improvement, related to the criteria of their programmes of study. There is insufficient review of results to inform future development. Although the department is aware of the need to develop and implement policies and plans for ensuring that the subject makes a full contribution to literacy, numeracy, ICT and citizenship, there is a need to move more energetically towards this.

HISTORY

146. Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- The standards achieved are good.
- The quality of teaching and learning are good.
- The attitudes of pupils are very good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- There is limited use of ICT.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory, particularly the poor level of storage.
- Increasing numbers of pupils taking the subject for GCSE are causing a strain on staffing.

147. Standards of work in history are good. In 2000, National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated above average attainment with girls outperforming boys, reflecting the national picture. These results show an improvement since the last report. At Key Stage 4, the GCSE results from 1996 to 2000 have been consistently above national averages. All pupils gained grades. Provisional figures for 2001 show this trend continuing. In 2000, in contrast to national figures, boys performed better than girls. The department attributes this to their skill in analysing historical evidence. In work seen, pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 9 they have a secure grasp of basic historical skills, such as chronology. For instance, pupils in Year 8 can accurately depict the Tudor family tree and the relationship of the monarchs to main events of the period. Limited observation of Years 10 and 11 and scrutiny of written work showed that most pupils are able to handle different historical sources well and to draw conclusions about evidence in order to construct relevant examination answers. An example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson about the assassinations at Sarajevo in 1914, where pupils considered effectively the reliability of various accounts, in order to answer questions about the importance of this event.

148. Improvements by the department since the last inspection have been very good. Schemes of work have been thoroughly overhauled, so that pupils now have more opportunity to pursue independent learning. Group work, under effective teacher guidance, is common in lessons, with different challenges being presented. In the Year 7 lessons observed, the overall aim was for pupils to understand the importance of the Roman army. Groups considered aspects such as recruitment, weapons, tactics and the living conditions of the soldier. Pupils are encouraged to carry out further research and to submit their results. The guidance given to non-specialist teachers has been improved and there are regular formal and informal consultations. As a result, the teaching is more securely based than previously. The criticism that the subject lacked adequate resources has been well met by the purchase of new sets of books and a broadening of teaching materials. A good scheme of assessment has been introduced enabling pupils to understand their level of performance and what they must do in order to improve their standards.

149. The quality of teaching and learning across throughout the school is always good and sometimes, very good. Lessons are well planned and securely based on good subject knowledge. Expectations are high and lesson aims are clearly explained to the pupils, so they know what they have to do. At the end of lessons, a well-conducted 'summary' session reinforces learning effectively and shows the progress which has been made. The management of pupils is very good and they remain on task throughout the lessons, which are well organised, with a good variety of activities. For example, pupils in Year 9 used photographs, drawings, newspaper excerpts, eye-witness accounts and poetry to reconstruct the conditions in the World War I trenches for the soldiers, many of whom came from the local area. This produced effective learning as pupils were able to show why they needed to study the topic, as well as making good progress in skills such as handling evidence. The provision for teaching pupils with special educational needs is good, with tasks appropriately matched to their attainment. They are well supported in the classroom by teachers and a limited number of classroom assistants. The progress of these pupils is good. Extended writing tasks effectively stretch the higher-attaining pupils. Appropriate amounts of homework are set, including research topics, related to classroom studies.

150. The attitudes of pupils towards history are very good. They work with good interest and they have a genuine enthusiasm for history, asking many appropriate questions. In lessons, they are very well behaved and there are good levels of concentration. Lessons proceed efficiently and no instances of time wasting were seen. Pupils work well together. Good examples were seen in Year 7 work on the Roman army, when boys and girls together developed good poster work for future classroom display. The standard of such display work in the classrooms is very good

151. The curricular opportunities in history are good. The National Curriculum is fully in place in Years 7 to 9 and is well taught. This, combined with good examination results, has led to increasing numbers in Years 10 and 11. There is good extra-curricular provision, especially the annual Year 9 visit to France to see the battlefields of World War I. This journey is supported by over half of the year group. The subject reflects the school's ethos very well, especially in questions of moral choice. For example, pupils in Year 9 were challenged to consider the moral issues for local men who volunteered for service in World War I. To increase the pupils' knowledge of other cultures, the Key Stage 3 scheme of work includes appropriate study units on the Romans and the black people of North America.

152. The leadership and management of the subject is very good. There is clear direction for the department and frequent consultation with colleagues. There is a shared determination to succeed. Documentation is very detailed and schemes of work are effective. The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance is good. A detailed scheme of assessment has been developed. Pupils are regularly tested and their marks

are linked to National Curriculum levels and GCSE Grades, so they are aware of their progress. Realistic targets are indicated to them, together with constructive comments to help them achieve their goals. Monitoring of teaching is informal and satisfactory. The department development plan is costed and realistic, with priorities clearly identified.

153. The standards of the department are adversely affected by three factors. The teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory. The classrooms are cramped, which restricts teaching activities, especially for large groups. Storage is poor, with only part use of an unlocked cleaner's cupboard, which limits the safe keeping and expansion of resources. The department's use of information and communication technology remains limited. Although a few pupils in Year 8 were observed using CD-ROM, there are only two computers available for use in the department and no connection to the Internet. The increasing numbers of pupils at Key Stage 4 are placing a strain on the two specialist teachers, especially when pastoral responsibilities disrupt teaching.

154. Overall, the history department is a good one, producing good results.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

155. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is good.

Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good.
- The quality and range of opportunities for learning are very good in lessons and out of class time.
- The assessment and monitoring of ICT achievement is well organised.

Areas for improvement

- The delivery of National Curriculum entitlement to ICT in Years 10 and 11.
- The development of a whole school policy for ICT.
- The strengthening of pupils' access to ICT across the curriculum.

156. Overall, standards of attainment at the end of Year 8 are good. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8 as a result of a well-taught and progressive course in ICT. Pupils in these year groups make good progress in their lessons, including high attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. During the inspection it was not possible to judge the overall standard by the end of Year 9 as ICT is not taught as a discrete subject and there was insufficient evidence from ICT taught across the curriculum. The National Curriculum levels achieved at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were good. At that time ICT was taught to all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

157. The overall standard of ICT in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. No pupils took the GCSE examination in 2000 or 2001. The standard of project work produced by those pupils taking the GCSE in 2002 is generally good and, in some cases very good. There is an expectation of good overall results in 2002. The number of pupils opting for the GCSE course in 2001 is significantly less than in 2000. This is the reverse of national trends. Progress overall is satisfactory, and good for those pupils who study the ICT course.

158. In Years 10 and 11 National Curriculum requirements are met only for those pupils who opt for the GCSE course. Some pupils have limited ICT experiences through Design Technology modules and physical education lessons. Standards achieved by the end of Year 11 are very variable for pupils who do not study these courses, as the experiences provided are inconsistent and insufficiently co-ordinated across other subjects.

159. Overall, the quality of teaching observed was good throughout the school. The teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject, and they use appropriate teaching methods which encourage pupils' interest and concentration. Expectations of the ICT teaching staff are high and pupils respond well to the challenges set. Lessons proceed at a good pace with attention to the needs of pupils with special educational needs, and this ensures good progress. Pupils demonstrate good thinking skills and effective use of equipment in their lessons. Peer support for pupils new to the school in Year 7 is a strong feature of the teaching strategy. Effective support is provided in extra-curricular time, to which there is a good response by pupils.

160. The leadership and management of ICT as a taught subject is good. There are well-documented schemes of work in place which give good coverage of the subject for Years 7 and 8 and the GCSE course. However, there is no whole school ICT policy or coherent curriculum map covering the full age range of the school. The National Curriculum requirement for all subjects to provide suitable opportunities to use ICT is not being met, although this was highlighted at the time of the last inspection. There has been insufficient improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection.

161. The school, using the National Grid for Learning funding, is in the process of making ICT resources available throughout the school and in the library area. This network, together with the two computer suites, will increase accessibility for pupils and subject teaching staff during the coming year. The impact on subject teaching staff of the New Opportunities Funding for teacher training and ICT has not yet been felt other than in the science department. There is an urgent need for the school to integrate both the physical and human ICT resources to produce and implement a whole school policy for ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

162. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is very good.

Strengths

- The level of attainment in French and Spanish is well above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils' attitude to language learning is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Information and Communications Technology is insufficiently used.
- Boys attainment in languages is still below that of girls.

163. Pupils' attainment in French and Spanish at age 14 according to National Curriculum teacher assessments is well above the national average. This is consistent with standards of work analysed and observed in school.

164. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in French were well above the national average. All pupils entering gained grades in the A*-G range. Girls performed better than boys although boys and girls performed better in French than in other subjects and better than boys and girls nationally. The results were lower than in the previous year but part of an upward trend to date. GCSE results in Spanish in 2000 were well above the national average for pupils gaining A*-C grades, and higher than in the previous year. All pupils entering gained grades in the A*-G range. Both boys and girls attained higher grades than in other school subjects and higher than boys and girls nationally.

165. Pupils aged 11 to 14 study either French or Spanish and a minority of higher-attaining pupils study the two languages in Years 8 and 9. Most pupils follow and understand lessons taught largely or entirely in the languages concerned. A minority, including some pupils with special educational needs, require repetition and sometimes translation to stay involved. Their speaking develops rapidly within a few weeks of starting the languages so that they can soon count, spell and conduct short conversations comprising greetings, courtesies and personal details. They read and write short captions and statements and learn to use questions forms. Reading and writing are largely accurate and by the end of Year 7 pupils write short descriptive passages and adapt their writing to different purposes such as short letters and dialogues dealing with everyday situations. In

Years 8 and 9 most pupils add to their store of vocabulary and structures covering topics such as their home and family and leisure pursuits. They learn to speak and write about leisure, shopping and finding their way about town. By the end of Year 9 pupils use a range of tenses to refer to the past and the future and use infinitive constructions to express their desires and intentions.

166. Pupils aged 14 to 16 produce work of very good quality. They understand and participate in lessons based on authentic texts and recordings and taught in uncompromising French and Spanish. The most able linguists attain an excellent level of proficiency, writing and speaking creatively and with personal expression. They express their thoughts and opinions in detail on teenage interests and concerns, ranging from education to the environment. They create formal letters booking accommodation and applying for jobs. Most pupils present some of their work using computers. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs consolidate work done earlier and acquire basic fluency in the language needed for travelling and living abroad.

167. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. Most lessons are good and over half are very good or excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They are fluent and clear in French and Spanish, adapting the language they use to make it challenging or accessible to suit pupil's ability. The use of tape recorders and mini language laboratories add further opportunities to hear and record good quality French and Spanish. Lessons are very well planned to contain a series of short, and varied activities that engage and sustain pupils' interest. There is logical progression towards specific aims as well as a strong emphasis on practical activities and the involvement of pupils in presentations. Pupils are accustomed to learning in partnership with classmates and benefit from the exchange of ideas and listening to different people speak. Humour and games, chants and songs feature regularly in lessons, so that pupils' enjoyment is usually evident. Occasionally, when activities continue too long their interest wanes and the quality of their learning is reduced. Relations in class are always positive and productive. The pride that pupils take in their achievements is evident in their ready responses and contributions, irrespective of age, gender, or ability. The bright and varied wall displays in the classroom and corridor areas indicate satisfaction in producing polished and attractive work.

168. Teachers use conventional resources including flash cards, overhead projectors to very good effect. They make and share helpful worksheets, often adapted to lower levels of literacy and providing useful extensions to the work done in class. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is continuous and thorough. They monitor and appraise pupils' speaking and mark written exercises regularly with supportive and appreciative comments. They have made some progress in target setting and in predicting pupils' future performance. Further development is needed so that pupils can take a full share in the assessment of their own attainment.

169. The department is very well led, enjoying the continued involvement and commitment of well-qualified teaching staff. Responsibilities are shared and tasks distributed equitably. Schemes of work and policy statements are clear and informative, regularly subject to review in response to changing demands. Since the last inspection GCSE results have improved in both French and Spanish and the scope of the curriculum has increased. Pupils with special educational needs have been included in the more challenging tasks. A detailed development plan matches the school's aims and lists relevant priorities for teachers to work towards. These include responses to some national concerns such as raising boys' attainment and developing the use of information and communications technology. The curriculum is of good quality and offers appropriate opportunities for more pupils to achieve well in one or two languages. Further opportunities are provided in extra GCSE classes, run after school. A programme of visits abroad and links through correspondence enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils will gain additional

benefits when suitable training enables teachers to exploit fully the resources of the Internet and communication by e-mail with partners overseas.

MUSIC

170. Overall, the quality of provision in music is very good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently high.
- The management of pupils is very good.
- Lessons are well planned and organised.
- The choral work and class singing is of very high quality.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation.
- Use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.

171. GCSE results in 2000 were well above the national average. The GCSE results in 2001 maintain this high standard, that has been consistently well above the national average for the last five years. However the number of entries is comparatively low. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 also indicate standards well above national expectations.

172. The standards of work seen in both key stages are well above national expectations. In Year 9, the pupils demonstrate very good notation skills, they read from the stave accurately with little use of pitch names written on the music. Their compositions show good structure and use such techniques as ostinato, harmonic patterns and chord selection. The pupils show good control of instruments and perform well in ensembles. They can hold independent parts, both when clapping rhythms and when singing. The singing is of a very high standard, both in class and in the extra-curricular activities where the school runs three choirs, one of which is for boys. Over a hundred pupils are involved in choral activities and vocal work is a major strength of the department. Instrumental pupils also achieve high standards. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls and all groups of pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 use ICT very effectively in their composing. Their compositions show a very good variety of style reflecting the individual interests of the pupils; there is a good feeling for harmonic structure and exploration of timbre and texture. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well; a pupil in Year 11 produced an outstanding composition, using a sophisticated software programme to sequence an attractive witty piece that exploited tone colours and rhythms. Performance skills are well developed; pupils play with great sensitivity and musicianship.

173. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and specialist instrumental skills, which are well used to support the pupils' music making. The lessons are crammed with activity, with very good organization and management by the teachers overcoming the severe limitations imposed by the very cramped accommodation. Expectations are high and the lessons are well paced with good use of time; this means that that the lessons are very productive and the pupils acquire musical skills and knowledge of instruments and composing techniques. The pupils have a good attitude to music, they are enthusiastic and enjoy the lessons; they work well independently but also collaborate very well in group and paired work, often without direct supervision. The teaching makes very good use of tasks that allow pupils to perform at different levels; this means that pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into all the activities. In addition, a high level of individual attention ensures that they make very good progress. However more use of tasks that are better matched to individual pupils' prior attainment would stretch the higher

attaining pupils even more. Information and communication technology is well used in Years 10 and 11,

where the groups are small, but insufficiently used in Years 7 to 9 owing to a lack of computers. Homework is used well in Years 10 and 11 but is not exploited in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is used well to monitor pupils' progress; pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and this, with written comments and individual attention by the teachers, keeps them well informed about their progress.

174. Since the last inspection the department has maintained and improved on the high standards of attainment and teaching which were reported. Some progress has been made in the use of ICT in Years 10 and 11, and a part-time technician has been appointed, but there is still a need for development in Years 7 to 9. Assessment and keeping of records of work have been improved and are still being developed. The accommodation has not been improved since the last inspection and lack of space continues to hamper the work of the department. The head of department provides very good leadership monitoring all aspects of the work well. Music continues to be a strength of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

175. Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is very good.

Strengths

- A broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular and community activities.
- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- The excellent relationships between pupils and staff.
- The very good attitudes of the pupils to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- To develop a formal policy for monitoring teaching and learning.
- To raise standards in GCSE, particularly targeting those pupils who gain a grade D.
- To ensure that schemes of work are linked to the National Curriculum 2000.
- To develop an assessment policy that is linked to the learning objectives in the schemes of work.

176. In 2000 GCSE results were well above the national average but the subject did not perform well when compared with other subjects in the school. Results in 2001 also indicate a continuing pattern. All pupils achieved at least a grade G in both years but almost a quarter of pupils gained a grade D.

177. From entering the school in Year 7 the pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 9 almost three quarters of the pupils achieve national expectations for the subject or better. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

178. It is not possible to make a judgement on pupils' attainment in core physical education in Year 11, as they were not in school at the time of the inspection. Pupils' course work in GCSE theory is good and pupils' work is above the standard expected nationally. They apply the knowledge they have learned accurately and make good progress within the structured framework of the course. In practical lessons they also demonstrate good skills and play the game with fluency and control. For example in badminton they keep a rally going using appropriate strokes and shots.

179. In core physical education pupils stay on task, practise hard to improve and achieve standards above those expected for pupils of similar age. In rugby and basketball they handle the ball with precision and control, demonstrating good understanding of rules and tactics.

180. In the lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, pupils' progress and achievement is good overall with most working at a standard above that expected nationally. In swimming, almost all pupils can swim at least 25 metres using a variety of strokes. In gymnastics, they link balances together, planning and performing sequences that flow smoothly and are of good quality. In games they transfer skills into small-sided games, which they play using a variety of passes and strategies. When given opportunity, pupils talk about their work and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding when answering questions. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with the other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with good opportunities to play for clubs, attend centres of excellence, attend extra coaching sessions and to play for representative teams

181. Teaching and learning ranges from good to very good, and is good overall. Teachers share objectives for the lesson, linking them to previous work so that pupils are clear about what is expected and what they are to learn. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and skills are broken into small steps, then put into context. For example, demonstrations are used effectively to illustrate the task, how it fits into the game, and to help pupils to develop evaluating skills. Questions are used to establish what pupils understand. For example, which pass to use in different attacking situations in games, or what is necessary to improve the quality of a sequence in gymnastics. The good pace of lessons keeps all pupils actively involved, and careful grouping of pupils ensures that they are challenged and work to their own ability. For example, as soon as one skill is acquired a new dimension is added, such as progressing from passing on the spot to passing on the move. Appropriate intervention by the teacher helps pupils to know what they need to improve and how they can do it. This also helps them to develop good evaluating skills. There is very good attention to safety in all lessons. Pupils are always well spaced and dressed appropriately. Resources are well used and there are always enough for each pupil, with some equipment adapted to meet individual needs. Pupils have good self-esteem, are motivated, interested and very keen to do well because they receive good feedback. Good behaviour is expected and received in all lessons and relationships are excellent. Within a few lessons opportunities for independent learning are not always developed and teaching is occasionally too didactic, with not enough time for pupils to evaluate their work.

182. Pupils' attitudes to physical education across all year groups range from very good to excellent. They are well motivated and keen to learn. Relationships are excellent and pupils work together co-operatively both in practices and team games. The latter are played competitively but fairly and always with the best of sporting attitudes. Pupils stay on task, show initiative and take responsibility whether they are directly supervised or not. For example, in small-sided games they referee themselves, playing within the rules. This supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are very few non-participants and standards of dress are excellent.

183. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the provision was endorsed when Sportsmark Gold was re-awarded in March 2001. Statutory requirements are fully met in all areas including the use of information and communication technology in the recently introduced 'My Body' programme.

184. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities support the curriculum, and community activities that are enhanced by the quality and range of partnerships with outside agencies, including primary schools, that have developed. The award of specialist college status in September 2000 has increased opportunities both within and outside the curriculum. There is good use of ongoing assessment in lessons but there is no assessment policy in place. The schemes of work are skill based and not linked to the National Curriculum.

185. The head of department provides effective leadership and communication in the department is very good. Communication with the senior management team, through the Director of Sport, is also very good. Staff are well qualified and good use is made of adults other than teachers such as coaches and sports development officers. Accommodation and learning resources are very good and excellent use is made of off-site facilities such as the Bolton Arena and the Leisure Centre. Within the specialist college bid there are plans to further enhance facilities with the addition of a covered astro-turf area. There is no formal policy for monitoring of teaching and learning in place.

186. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Differentiation is addressed through grouping, open-ended or different tasks and use of a range of equipment. There is a comprehensive programme for talented and gifted pupils and the curriculum is broad and balanced. The development plan has clear targets for the next three years. Units of work are progressive but are not linked to the National Curriculum.

DRAMA

187. Overall, the quality of provision in drama is excellent.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good and often excellent.
- The leadership and management of the subject is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- A larger studio with carpet and blackout would enhance delivery of the subject.

188. Drama has been introduced as a discreet subject since the last inspection, and is taught throughout the school. A GCSE examination in drama will be taken by pupils for the first time in 2002. Drama is a strong feature of the school's provision. Pupils work well together showing a high level of commitment. Drama makes a very positive contribution to the overall ethos of the school, and enriches liturgical celebrations. From 2000 to 2001 the drama department has been involved in a Y7 welcome mass, Advent and Lent liturgies, *Godspell* and *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*.

189. Drama provides very good opportunities for the personal development of pupils. Their aesthetic education is enhanced, and they are encouraged to explore a range of issues and ideas. For example, a Y8 class exploring injustice, through the trial of William Jobling, was able to make links to the recent aeroplane crashes in New York. Pupils respond very well to a range of texts from different times and cultures. They shape ideas and select forms to structure work and evaluate others. Pupils are developing performance, devising and developing improvisational skills, and they are developing and realising ideas and communicating. Individual, pair and small group presentations are constructed carefully. Pupils' use of language and voice projection is very good. Pupils are developing attitudes, skills and techniques that have a positive effect on other areas of learning.

190. The quality of teaching in drama is very good and often excellent. The teachers' excellent subject knowledge has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Their enthusiasm inspires the pupils, whose motivation, determination to succeed through honest self-criticism and teamwork are of the highest order. For example, in a Year 10 lesson pupils worked in threes to create a sequence and make a presentation to the whole class. The class analysed and evaluated the presentation before offering constructive criticism. Lessons are well structured and flow at a good pace. Excellent directions and questioning draws all pupils into the lessons, and elicits excellent responses from them. Pupil motivation is very high. Excellent planning and organisation are strong features of the

teaching.

191. The leadership and management of drama is excellent. Very comprehensive and progressive schemes of work have been developed, and the subject makes a significant contribution to the aims of the school. The curriculum provides a wide range of learning opportunities for pupils to achieve well. Close links have been forged with history and Leisure and Tourism courses which support investigations and presentations. As a result the subject makes a significant contribution to the curriculum aims of the school. Good assessment procedures are in place which are closely linked to individual pupil targets. Pupils begin their study in drama with a baseline assessment, which is augmented by ongoing self-assessment and formative teacher assessment. This ensures that teachers are aware of individual needs of pupils. Those pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all activities and make good progress throughout the school. Accommodation is satisfactory, but a larger studio with carpet and blackout would enhance the experience of the subject for pupils.