

INSPECTION REPORT

CARDINAL LANGLEY RC HIGH SCHOOL

Middleton, Manchester

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105844

Headteacher: Mr C A Mason

Reporting inspector: Mr R Holmes
2632

Dates of inspection: 5 – 8 March 2001

Inspection number: 188085

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rochdale Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Canon A McBride

Date of previous inspection: 7 May 1996

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14404	Alan Rolfe	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Community links and partnership Health and safety Attendance and behaviour strategies How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3758	Tony Barringer	Team inspector	English	
5985	Mike Holland	Team inspector	Science	Accommodation
29428	David Toft	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Assessment
17868	Eileen Metcalf	Team inspector	Art	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
21803	Laura Ramsey	Team inspector	Design and technology	Support and guidance
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Geography	
19596	Bernard Treacy	Team inspector	History	Learning resources
2626	Marion Thompson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	The Curriculum Extra-curricular activities
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19513	Pam Dunwell	Team inspector	Physical education	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cardinal Langley High School is a Roman Catholic comprehensive school taking boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. There are currently 1074 pupils on roll, 148 of whom are in the sixth form. This makes it larger than most schools. Almost all the pupils are white and only two have English as an additional language. Just over 16 percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is close to the national average.

When they come into the school, pupils have the full range of abilities found in a typical comprehensive school. Seventeen percent of pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, which is a similar proportion to that found in most schools and one percent have statements for their special needs, which is lower than in most schools.

Because of the school's denominational nature, religious education and related issues are covered separately in a report produced by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2000, succeeding the previous headteacher who had led the school for many years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cardinal Langley is a good school. It is very effective in the way it provides a strong Catholic ethos and supports the overall development of all its pupils. Teaching is good, pupils pay close attention in class and behave well. Standards of attainment are about average and the new headteacher's leadership is re-focusing efforts very successfully on raising them further. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good and relationships with pupils are very strong.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the school and behave well.
- The school takes good care of pupils, and support for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The headteacher's very effective leadership is taking the school forward successfully.
- There are strong links with the community.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Results in GCSE examinations have not risen quickly enough.
- The sixth form is not effective enough.
- The school's management structure is cumbersome and roles overlap.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection report, in May 1996, identified nine areas for improvement. These have almost all been tackled successfully, particularly those that involved the quality of teaching, although there are still some shortages of resources. The school has maintained the quality of its pastoral support and its distinctive ethos and attendance has improved, but examination results have not improved quickly enough. Overall the school has made satisfactory progress.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3	C	C	B	A
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	E	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Results at Key Stage 3 have been just below average over the last three years and were much better in 2000, above the national average and well above the results of similar schools. Pupils performed best in English, where results were well above average. In science they were above average and in mathematics they were average.

In the work seen in the school at Key Stage 3, pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education and close to the expected standards in modern foreign languages. Standards are higher in English, science, art and information and communication technology (ICT) as a result of effective teaching.

Results at GCSE are still in line with the national average, but they are not rising as quickly and a gap is opening up. Boys and girls usually perform close to their national averages, but in 2000, when the schools results were much lower than usual, boys did much worse than girls. In the 2000 examinations, results were above average in business studies, art, history, English literature, ICT and in design and technology. They were close to average in most other subjects but below in science, mathematics, English and Spanish. Work seen in the school was generally much better than these results indicate and the school is likely to reach its target of 45 percent of pupils achieving at least five passes at grade C or above next year. This target is appropriately high.

The low results at A level partly reflect the school's policy of letting students join the sixth form with relatively low results at GCSE. However, too many students, particularly girls, do not do as well at A level as their GCSE results would predict. Results in GNVQ courses are much higher, but only a few students follow these courses, although they would be appropriate for many others in the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They are keen to learn and want to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in class is often very good and pupils also behave well around the school. More pupils are excluded than in similar schools, but the rate is falling.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and pupils develop in maturity and self-confidence.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Authorised absence is lower than average but unauthorised absence is a little higher.

The school's ethos of care and concern has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Ninety-eight percent of lessons were at least satisfactory, with 69 percent good or better. Teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4 where it is at least good in over three quarters of lessons and in a third of lessons it is very good or excellent.

This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in every subject throughout the school and good in English, science, art, design and technology, drama, geography, history, ICT, physical education, personal and social education (PSE) and music.

Teaching and learning are both good throughout the school. Teachers work hard and have very good relationships with pupils. Lessons are often lively and interesting. However, pupils are sometimes not involved actively enough in their learning. In some lessons teachers are not explicit enough about what the pupils should learn. This results in some lessons not being as effective as they should be. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and often work hard, but sometimes the style of the lesson puts them in the role of appreciative audience rather than learners. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, particularly in the specialist rooms. There is an agreed approach to literacy and teachers help pupils develop their skills well, but there is not an equivalent approach to numeracy across the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and balanced at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 it is generally broad but not all pupils follow design and technology courses. The curriculum in the sixth form is based mainly on A level courses with few vocational courses although these would suit many of the students. The school has an effective strategy for literacy, but not for numeracy. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to follow
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good well-organised provision, particularly for those pupils being taught in the special needs rooms.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good provision overall, and particularly strong in spiritual and moral education. Many subjects contribute well to this area and it is a particularly strong feature of the school's work.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils. The school's strong pastoral care for its pupils is being used to help them achieve well in Key Stages 3 and 4, making effective use of assessment information to set realistic targets. This is not yet happening in the sixth form.

The school has effective links with parents but has recognised these links need strengthening and is currently improving them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is leading the school very effectively and re-focussing its efforts successfully. The senior management team work hard and are supporting developments effectively, but there is too much overlap of roles. There is no co-ordinator for numeracy.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed to the school's development and carry out their responsibilities effectively; all statutory requirements are met, apart from the provision of design and technology for all at Key Stage 4.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is beginning to use assessment information very effectively to judge how well it is doing and to set targets for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Spending is controlled very carefully and funds are used wisely to help the school move forwards.

The school has sufficient, well-qualified teachers. The arrangements for supporting new staff are very good. Resources are adequate in most subjects, but the library is small and there are too few information books, particularly for the sixth form.

Management is taking the school forward effectively by concentrating more on raising standards. People have clearer lines of responsibility, but too many roles still overlap. Spending decisions are taken wisely after wide consultation and careful consideration of cost and quality.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils make good progress • Teaching is good • Pupils behave well • The school is approachable • Expectations are high • Pupils are helped to grow in maturity • The school is well led 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework • Better communications with parents • More extra-curricular activities

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views of the school. Their concern about communications have been acknowledged by the school and reporting is already being improved. Homework was set regularly during the inspection. The team judged that the school has a good range of extra-curricular activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Pupils coming into the school at age 11 have the range and distribution of attainment typically found in a fully comprehensive intake.

2 In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 when most are 14 years old, the overall performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, taken over the last three years, has been just below average. Results in English have been above average, science just above and mathematics below average. Results in 2000 were considerably better. For all three subjects taken together, they were above average compared with all other schools and well above the average of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. English results were well above average, science results were above average for all schools and well above compared with similar school, mathematics results were average. Over the last three years boys at Cardinal Langley have scored above the national average in English and science but have fallen below in mathematics; girls have also beaten their average in English, they have been in line with their average in science and, like the boys, below in mathematics. Overall results have risen in all three subjects at Key Stage 3, but not as much in mathematics as in the others.

3 In the work seen in the school at Key Stage 3, pupils were achieving the standards expected for their age in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education and close to the expected standards in modern foreign languages. Standards were higher in English, science, art and ICT as a result of effective teaching. Pupils develop good literacy skills in many subjects. They talk confidently and express themselves clearly in writing as a result of the consistent approach adopted by the school. There is no numeracy policy and pupils do not develop the same facility with number as they do with language.

4 At GCSE results have been close to the national average and to the average for similar schools for the last five years, but they have not been rising as quickly as in other schools, largely because standards have remained too low in mathematics and science, and a gap is beginning to open up. The results in 2000 were lower than the school usually achieves and only 34 percent of pupils gained five or more passes at grade C or above, compared with 47 percent nationally. However a higher proportion than nationally achieved five or more passes of at least grade G, and pupils' overall performance, as expressed by their average point score of 35.5, is close to the national average, where the point score is 38.5. Boys and girls have each been close to their national averages, taken over the last three years, but boys performed considerably worse than girls in 2000.

5 The best results at GCSE were in business studies and art, with English literature, history, ICT and design and technology also above average. Other subjects were close to average, apart from science, mathematics, English and Spanish where they were below. The standards of work seen during the inspection were generally higher than those reflected in last years examination results. They were lower than they should be in mathematics but in line with expectations in most subjects and above average in art, ICT and music. As in Key Stage 3, pupils' overall language development is good, but their skills in using mathematics to support their work in other subjects are under-developed. The school's target for GCSE next year of 45 percent of pupils achieving five or more passes at grade C or above is realistically high and likely to be reached in view of the standards seen in lessons.

6 Cardinal Langley accepts students into the sixth form with lower qualifications than many other schools. As a result, students following many of the A level courses have often not reached such a high standard at GCSE as usual. This partly explains the school's A level results being below the national average in the last three years and well below in 2000. Boys in general perform as well at A level as their GCSE scores would predict, but girls do not, and this represents some under-achievement. Results in GNVQ courses are much higher than in A level courses, but they are taken by only a relatively small number of students although many more would benefit from the style of learning they promote.

7 Pupils are making good progress in most subjects at Key Stage 3 and achieve well. Although still satisfactory, progress is not as marked in Key Stage 4. It continues to be satisfactory in the sixth form, but some students do not achieve as well as they should, considering their GCSE grades. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special talents, are supported effectively and make similar progress. In the 2000 GCSE examinations average and below average attainers did relatively better than high attaining pupils, but usually they do as well as each other in reaching their potential. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress towards their individual targets. This is especially so where their targets involve improvements in behaviour.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, and overall behaviour is good. Both of these elements have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

9 Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school; they are able to identify favourite subjects and a significant number are engaged in the extra curricular activities provided by the school. The majority of pupils are interested in what they are doing and are willing to take an active part in their learning. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, enter into classroom discussions in a constructive manner, and maintain their concentration for appropriate periods of time. Pupils with special educational needs generally have good attitudes to work and behave well in lessons and around the school.

10 In virtually all lessons seen during the inspection behaviour was good and in many cases very good. Only in a very small number of lessons were a few pupils seen to lose concentration and become involved in low level inappropriate behaviour, and generally this was linked to lessons where the presentation of the lesson was uninspiring, and not well organised, but even then most pupils remained involved in the lesson. However, inspection of the school exclusion records indicate a relatively high incidence of exclusions. During the last academic year there were 136 fixed term exclusions and one permanent exclusion. Discussions with the headteacher indicate that the reasons for exclusion are due to serious violation of the school's code of conduct. However, in an effort to reduce the number of exclusions the school is introducing a behavioural intervention strategy targeted at pupils whose behaviour is perceived to make them vulnerable to exclusions. This is still in its early stages. The current levels of exclusion do not reflect the good standard of behaviour seen during the inspection, which is at the good level reported at the last inspection.

11 Despite the cramped nature of the circulation areas including staircases, pupils move about the school in a mature and sensitive manner. There were no instances of inappropriate behaviour observed in the corridors at lesson change over or at lunchtime. Outside of lessons pupils interact well together, before and after school and during breaks, they chat and socialise together without any signs of rowdy or boisterous behaviour. Bullying is an occasional problem, the school has in place an anti-bullying policy which enables the school to react quickly and positively to known instances of bullying. However, a minority of

parents and pupils indicate that these procedures are not always successful. Generally pupils treat school equipment with care and respect. However, there is some graffiti in the toilets and at the rear of the school, and in some areas there is an excess amount of litter.

12 Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, so too are relationships between pupils – they co-operate well together in pairs and groups, and are willing and able to listen to and consider the views of others. These relationships have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are developing their understanding of other people's cultures and beliefs, and are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, mainly through their studies in religious education and in personal and social education (PSE). For example, in a Year 10 PSE lesson when considering the effects of 'peer pressure' on their actions and attitudes, pupils were able to offer constructive and quite mature contributions to classroom discussions, identifying that some actions they had taken, such as smoking, was a result of peer pressure, that required them 'to do something to fit in'. Pupils in all year groups show a willingness to take additional responsibilities, undertaking a range of duties as classroom monitors. Older pupils volunteer to take part in the Senior Students' scheme, and sign contracts to undertake responsibilities allotted to them which can involve assisting staff at parents' evening, year discos and careers conventions. A number of new initiatives are being developed to enable pupils to undertake a wider range of responsibilities which include a school council, pupils' mentors and a prefect system which are improvements since the last inspection. However, pupils have limited opportunities to use their initiative to further their own learning. In almost all lessons seen pupil learning was teacher directed.

13 Overall attendance is satisfactory; authorised attendance is broadly in line with national averages, although unauthorised absences are above national averages. Overall, this represents an improvement since the last inspection when attendance levels were below 90 percent. However, attendance in Year 11 remains below 90 percent and is unsatisfactory. Registration is undertaken morning and afternoon with individual form registration, and meets statutory requirements. Use of the morning registration period is variable; in many pupils are involved in good quality learning activities, whilst in some there are no learning opportunities at all. Overall, attendance in the sixth form, whilst not statutory, on many occasions is poor, and so is punctuality, which affects results.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS AND STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14 The quality of teaching is good. Sixty nine percent of lessons were good or better and only two percent were unsatisfactory. This is a much better picture than at the time of the last inspection when teaching was sound but had significant weaknesses in science and design and technology across the school, and in mathematics and modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in every subject and is good in English, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music, physical education, PSE and in GNVQ courses. Teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4 where over three quarters of lessons are good or better and a third are very good or excellent.

15 Teachers are particularly successful in establishing good working relationships and managing pupils successfully so that they concentrate and behave well in lessons. Almost all lessons during the inspection were very orderly. Pupils followed instructions carefully and were keen to do well, although at times they were passive rather than actively involved in the lessons.

16 Teachers know their subject well and they often make lessons lively and interesting by choosing material carefully and presenting it in a stimulating way. In many lessons they

work very hard to grab the pupils' attention. Sometimes they work considerably harder than the pupils who can slip into the role of an appreciative audience rather than active participants in learning.

17 In the most successful lessons, the teacher has very clear aims, expressed in terms of what the pupils will gain from the lesson and the pupils know what they should expect to achieve. Pupils work hard and productively during the lesson. Teachers use questioning skilfully to raise interest, extend pupils' thinking and to check that they understand. There are a variety of tasks which challenge the pupils with the teacher providing appropriate support so that they are successful. There is a brisk and lively pace throughout and enough time is provided at the end of the lesson to review what has been learnt, pick up any problems that need resolving and set the scene for the next lesson.

18 A number of lessons had many good features and were taught well in the way that pupils were organised and material was presented but were not as successful as they could have been because planning concentrated more on what the teacher would do rather than what pupils would learn. In some lessons there is too much concern for pupils appearing to succeed in the tasks that are set, rather than gaining real knowledge and understanding; for example in a French lesson pupils were given a list of phrases to use in conversation, which they read out successfully, but did not properly comprehend.

19 Teachers in all subjects help pupils to develop skills in literacy by encouraging them to express ideas clearly and fully in their answers to questions. They make a point of introducing the appropriate technical vocabulary and encouraging pupils to use the words correctly. Written work is usually marked carefully and there is an approach to correcting spelling and grammar which is usually followed. Work in this area is guided by an effective whole school literacy policy. In contrast, there is no policy for numeracy across the school and as a result no coherent approach. Individual subjects use numeracy, such as work on graphs in geography, but opportunities are missed to link the work together into a programme to support pupils' overall development of numeracy.

20 Pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from mainstream classes for English and mathematics in Years 7 and 8. In these classes teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well and use their high level of subject knowledge to provide work for each individual pupil that is challenging and at an appropriate level. Where extra support is provided in lessons, it is effective and there is good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants. Where no support is provided, the level of provision for pupils with special educational needs is less consistent. There are detailed and specific individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs that contain well-focussed targets.

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

21 The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. For Years 7 - 9, the quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory. Pupils study all the subjects of the national curriculum as well as religious education. This provision is enhanced by PSE, a careers guidance programme in Year 9, and drama. Pupils study Spanish as well as French in Year 9, but the time allocated (one hour per week) is too little to allow pupils to make significant progress and detracts from standards attained in French. The time allocated for ICT whilst below national guidelines, allows the requirements of the National Curriculum to be met, and a larger than average number of pupils reaches expected levels. It does, however, restrict the opportunity for the most able to reach the highest levels and this is reflected in results. The interruption of provision for drama, which is taught in Years 7 and 8, but not in

Year 9, stops the progression and the development of skills for pupils who study drama in Year 10. Subject courses provide a reasonable range of appropriate and stimulating activities.

22 Curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall but has some weaknesses. All pupils study a compulsory core of subjects and religious studies, which supports the religious ethos of the school. Within the compulsory core only double award science is available and a number of pupils would benefit from the study of single science, which would allow them to choose other subjects which better meet their needs and interests. This core does not include a design and technology subject. These are offered as options taken by about half the pupils. This is in breach of statutory requirements and is due to a lack of appropriate accommodation and resources. The school has plans to include the subject in the core next year.

23 The option pattern allows pupils a reasonable choice of traditional courses, mainly for GCSE, but with some alternative accreditation to meet the needs of groups of pupils, for example, those of below average attainment or those who follow short courses and wish to gain accreditation. The only vocational course offered in Key Stage 4 is in business studies. From September 2001 a pilot GNVQ course will be offered in ICT. Pupils can choose to use one option for supervised study if they feel it would be of benefit to them. The quality of the provision is variable and the school is reviewing how it is taught. Rightly, the school is replacing this with a key skills course beginning in September 2001. The organisation of the short course/study support option and the GCSE course for Spanish, which allows pupils to drop their first foreign language, is not an effective use of pupils' time and depresses the standards achieved at the end of Year 11.

24 The school operates a policy of encouraging pupils to stay on into the sixth form but does not plan a curriculum to meet their wide needs. The courses offered are mainly traditional A and AS-levels, which normally require good performance at GCSE if students are to be successful, and only a limited number of GNVQs are offered. Many subjects are taught to small groups of students, which leads to inefficient use of staff. This also results in a number of mixed age or mixed examination groups, for example in mathematics where there are groups working for different examinations. This adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning as teachers cannot meet the wide range of learning needs of these students.

25 Curriculum arrangements provide good access for pupils with special educational needs. Where they are withdrawn from mainstream classes, they receive their full curriculum entitlement. Where the school works with other institutions to provide for pupils with special educational needs, the relationship is constructive. Arrangements have developed well since the last inspection.

26 Pupils are prepared well to make choices about their future by an effective careers programme, which begins in Year 9. They benefit from having easy access to good quality resources and advice, and good arrangements are in place for Year 10 pupils to have work experience for two weeks. The school is working towards an external award, Careers Education Quality Award. The process has improved the quality of provision because the school has evaluated and modified its provision to meet the standards of the external award it aims to achieve.

27 The provision of extracurricular activities is a strong feature of the school. Every lunchtime and at the end of each day a large number of pupils participate in a wide range of activities. Sporting activities attract large numbers of pupils, many of whom attain distinction in their chosen sports. The school production is popular, and there is a range of subject

based clubs and study support activities on offer, for example extension classes in modern foreign languages, science and mathematics. The school also provides good opportunities for educational trips and visits which enhance the curriculum, for example, visits and work experience opportunities in France and Spain, field trips in geography and science including a visit to a brewery! They provide valuable sources of information and understanding which help pupils achieve better in the subjects they follow.

28 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. All these aspects are well integrated as part of the Catholic ethos of the school. As at the time of the last inspection the school's mission statement and curriculum aims have a strong influence on practice in the school.

29 Provision for spiritual development is very good. The spiritual ethos permeates the whole school giving pupils a sense of meaning in life. The school meets the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Pupils' self esteem and the quality of their relationships are supported by the firmly held view of each person's intrinsic worth because mankind is made in the image of God. This concept was very well illustrated in an assembly; that one's worth does not depend on one's actions, successes, failures, or the damages one might have suffered. The ideals of the school's founder and his commitment to the education of the poor are kept in clear focus. The use of the chapel with its calm atmosphere underpins the spiritual life of the school. The weekly voluntary Mass held during lunchtime is well attended and contributes to spiritual awareness in reflections such as that of the Lenten homily, that one 'does not live by bread alone'. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective in assemblies. In history, visits to the trenches and plans to visit Rome in 2001 along with lectures on 'Germany 1871-1945' make good provision for pupils to reflect on past events. In geography there are good opportunities to reflect on the world and its wonders.

30 Provision for moral development is very good. The pupils are expected to behave well, respect others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. As at the time of the last inspection the PSE programme is set within a clear moral and ethical context. The staff themselves set very good examples and the general ethos of the school creates positive expectations of pupils. Care for others is promoted actively in assemblies and in tutor periods, with examples presented of people who have devoted their lives to charitable work. Pupils are engaged in fundraising for local, national and international charities. They are given opportunities to show initiative here. Links are forged with missionary work, for example in Uganda. In PSE lessons there are strong moral messages on the nature of friendships and studies of how peer pressure can lead some people to act against their better judgement. In French pupils discuss the morality involved in war and whether war can ever be justified. In physical education there is a significant philosophy of fair play, good sportsmanship and not winning at all costs. Physical education makes a significant contribution to pupils' moral and social values by the involvement in school life, and the programme in the sixth form enables students to gain the Sport Leaders Award.

31 Social development is an integral part of the caring ethos of the school, and is good overall. There are opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities. There is a school council and approximately 40 pupils have recently completed training to act as student counsellors. They will offer to be available to listen to and support other pupils as the need arises. Most departments make a positive contribution to the provision for social development by having an emphasis on work in pairs and collaborative work as well as individual work. There are lots of extra curricular activities that provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to develop positive relationships. These include a range of sports, drama, musical activities and fundraising for charities. There are no social areas for Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils to use at break and lunchtimes. However, the pupils have access to most areas

of the building and use the privilege with care and consideration. Students in the sixth form have a pleasant social area and a study room in an annex to the library

32 Provision for cultural development is good. The PSE programme helps pupils to look at the modern multi-cultural environment in which they live. Multi-cultural themes are built into the curriculum work of many areas such as art, music, geography, French, English and drama. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions. In religious education pupils are introduced to the major world religions and their associated cultures. There is a small number of Muslim pupils in the school and a special place is provided for these pupils' daily prayer. There is a good awareness of multi-cultural issues through close links with charities such as Christian Aid and CAFOD. Overall the process of education is informed by Catholic moral teaching which presents pupils with a radical alternative view of the world informed by the teaching of Jesus Christ. Central to this view is an awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of modern life.

33 Community links are good. There are effective links with local business and the industrial community. All pupils in Year 10 and many sixth form students have benefited from these links in terms of work experience or work placements respectively. The school uses the local environment as a learning resource to assist pupils in their geographical studies and has strong local links with both amateur and professional sports clubs. Their involvement with a local bank has enabled the school to run a basic computer course for more than 50 unemployed parents of whom in excess of 95 percent gained a formal qualification. The school has also benefited from the 'matched funding' scheme operated by the local bank in relation to funds raised by the school.

34 Links with partner institutions are strong, as they were at the last inspection. The school has appointed a liaison teacher to oversee the transitional arrangements from junior to secondary school, and over time has developed very effective procedures to ensure a smooth and stress free transition. The school has four feeder schools; the staff and some pupils from Year 7 and Year 8 visit these and discuss the transition procedures with Year 6 pupils and what they can expect when they move to their new school, including the size of the school, how they will be helped to cope with their new environment, and the help available. Parents receive good quality information about the transitional arrangements and visit the school with their children meeting with the headteacher, head of year and form tutors. The liaison teacher meets Year 6 staff to ensure all relevant information relating to pupils' academic and personal development is taken into consideration when forming class lists. Pupils have day visits in preparation for transfer, during which they receive taster lessons, meet with form tutors and familiarise themselves with their new environment. There are some well established curricular links, for example both physical educational and design and technology staff have been involved in the professional development of primary colleagues. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 receive good quality information on their academic and personal achievements and impartial advice about their future careers. The school have particularly strong links with Leeds University, Trinity and All Saints, in relation to initial teacher training.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35 This is a very caring school. Pupils and teachers are well known to each other; form tutors are well aware of the individual needs of pupils, who are confident that they can approach teachers should they have any problems, and that appropriate advice and guidance would be forthcoming. The school has in place a health and safety policy which meets statutory requirements, and good attention is given to health and safety in lessons. However, assessment of fire risk has yet to be completed. Responsibility for such

assessment has been delegated to line managers, and there is no one with overall responsibility to ensure that such inspections have been undertaken. As a result other assessment procedures are also not fully in place. Overall, arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, There are three members of staff with designated responsibility for child protection, all of whom have received appropriate training. However, initial guidance in the staff handbook does not contain information relating to the signs and symptoms of abuse or procedures to be followed should allegations be made against staff. Overall the school have good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. Heads of year meet the education welfare officer each week to discuss the attendance records of pupils with poor attendance records. Any such pupils are targeted for 'first day' contact and notification to the educational welfare officer if no reasons for absence are forthcoming. Pupils are awarded certificates for good attendance. The recently appointed learning mentors are having a positive impact on the attendance and behaviour of the pupils they work with.

36 The school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school has high expectations of good behaviour, which is reflected in the school's Good Behaviour Policy, and code of conduct which seeks to recognise and reward good behaviour, but hold pupils accountable for poor behaviour. The school has in place procedures to discourage and eliminate bullying and oppressive behaviour, and generally these procedures are effective. The school recognises that the current level of fixed term exclusion is high, compared to both local and national averages. The school is now developing behavioural strategies, aimed at pupils who have been subjected to fixed term exclusion or who may be in the future, to assist these pupils to moderate their behaviour and in doing so, reduce the number of exclusions.

37 Generally, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in the school are good but not enough use is made of the information collected. There is thorough and detailed collection of information on each pupil. This data is collated centrally and extensive analysis of pupils' performance takes place. Relevant information is disseminated to all staff, and departments generally have methodical and detailed marking, assessment and recording procedures in place, with particularly good practice seen in geography, business studies, art, ICT and English.

38 The extensive information on pupils' progress is used satisfactorily. It could be focused more clearly on improving the academic progress of individual pupils or on setting individual academic targets in each subject. This is particularly so in the sixth form.

39 There is a staff handbook of procedures for assessment, but there is no means of monitoring departmental implementation of these. Together with the lack of clear responsibility for the overall co-ordination of all the strands of assessment, practice is inconsistent in the use of assessment to guide planning and to support academic attainment, either for individuals or groups. In Year 11 effective use of information is made when mentoring selected pupils who have been identified as under-achievers but the good practice seen in this mentoring is not extended to other years or indeed consistently practised in Year 11. However, the school is aware of the need to make more effective, co-ordinated and consistent use of the assessment process and is developing software to support whole school developments in identifying pupils' potential, tracking pupils' progress against it and tackling under-achievement. There are good assessment procedures in place for tracking attainment and progress for pupils with special educational needs. This enables new and realistic targets to be regularly set and contributes to raising standards.

40 Good support and guidance is provided for pupils through the pastoral system, and every effort is made to involve parents. The management and organisation of the pastoral system is effective and very well co-ordinated by the pastoral deputy head, heads of year and

assistant heads of year. The form tutor system lies at the heart of the pastoral system and is the key to monitoring the social, personal and academic development. Form tutors know their pupils well. All pupils have an annual review day with a member of the pastoral team where personal and academic progress is discussed and an action plan negotiated. The process for addressing under-achievement between review days is through a well-established referral system where subject teachers refer pupils to form tutors. Sixth form students are regularly counselled about their academic performance through the tutor group system.

41 The PSE programme is delivered through a carousel system by a committed team of teachers with specialist knowledge, in specific areas of the programme of study. Sex education and education about drug abuse are part of the programme. Teaching is good, lessons are well planned and organised, teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and use a range of teaching and learning styles. Pupils respond well to the programme; they are encouraged to think independently and they are interested in the work

42 The school promotes good attendance and positive behaviour successfully. Pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions, and respond well to it. Parents appreciate the school's efforts to improve attendance and generally give good support. The school acknowledges achievement and positive behaviour through the use of a merits system leading to the awarding of bronze, silver and gold certificates and trophies. Opportunities for pupils to take some responsibility in the running of the school are given through the Senior Student scheme and the newly established school and year councils. Pupils take great pride in receiving recognition for achievement in Year 11 at an Award Evening and a certificate for satisfactory completion of work experience. Clear procedures for dealing with daily routines concerning the well being of pupils, are set out in the Pastoral Handbook and School Prospectus. Pupils are supported well during periods of absence. Good systems are in place with external agencies to support the school and individual pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43 Overall parents have positive views of the school. In particular, parents are pleased with the standards of behaviour, the quality of teaching, the expectation that their children will work hard and the way the school is led and managed. Most parents also indicated that they feel welcome in the school, their children enjoyed coming to school and the school is helping them to become more mature. Parents at the parents' meeting were supportive of the school. Evidence from the inspection mostly confirms these positive views of the school. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about the homework their children received, that they did not receive sufficient information about their children's progress, the school did not work closely enough with parents and there was a lack of extra curricular activities. A survey that the school had carried out itself had already identified some of these concerns, particularly in relation to homework and the relationships with parents. The school is already improving homework arrangements and the way it communicates with parents. Inspectors considered that there is a good range of extra curricular activities.

44 A relatively small number of parents assist in extra curricular events, mainly sporting activities, and accompany pupils on school trips. Few parents are involved in pupils' learning within the school. Pupils' journals provide a good means of communication between parents and the school and helps parents to be involved in their children's learning at home.

45 Overall the quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The School Prospectus and annual governors' report provide a wide range of information about the school and its activities. Newsletters are written each term and letters about specific events ensure that parents are aware of current school issues. Parents were consulted about the

home and school agreement, and virtually all parents signed the agreement. However, it has not been in place long enough to make a significant impact on the school's partnership with parents. The school have been active in seeking parental views about the school, and responded to parents' views, for example ensuring homework is set regularly. Parents are invited to one parents' meeting each year. Year 7 parents have an additional meeting early in the school year, at which time they can discuss their children's progress. Attendance at these meetings is very good. Overall, pupils' reports are satisfactory, however there are some inconsistencies. Most give good information about pupils' strengths, though not all make clear what they need to do to improve. There is an active Parent Teacher Association that organises social and fund-raising events; significant amounts of money have been raised to provide additional learning resources, which have had a positive effect on pupils' learning.

46 The school has good arrangements to involve parents of pupils with special educational needs in the development and review of their children's individual educational plans. The school maintains good formal and informal contacts with parents. Parents usually attend annual reviews of their children's progress and there are good contacts with the local authority's services.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47 The current headteacher moved to Cardinal Langley from the headship of another school in September 2000. The previous headteacher had led the school for many years and had previously been the deputy headteacher. During this long period of stability the school has built up a justified reputation locally for the care it takes of its pupils and its strong Catholic ethos. It has also achieved better results in test and examinations than many neighbouring schools, but these results have not improved as quickly as in other schools and are falling behind the national average at GCSE. The new headteacher has a very clear and detailed understanding of this situation and is determined to improve the school's academic performance without compromising its mission to support all pupils equally.

48 Considerable progress has already been made in re-focussing the school's efforts. Teachers and pastoral staff are now supplied with carefully chosen statistical information so that they can track individual pupils' progress, check that it is as good as it should be and provide extra support if necessary. Similar information is also beginning to be used by management to compare the progress made by pupils in different teaching groups and look for ways of improving performance when necessary. These developments are at a relatively early stage, but are already having a significant impact, particularly in establishing a climate of honesty in acknowledging where things need improving and a determination to use the school's considerable resources to carry the improvement through.

49 These significant developments have been managed very effectively by the headteacher and are being fully supported by the senior management team. Staff on the senior management team work hard and are committed to the school, but the team itself is too large and many roles overlap. This has been a deliberate policy in the past so that there would be a wide involvement in management but the system has also led to some sluggishness in decision making. Much clearer roles have been established since September with staff accepting direct responsibility for aspects of the school's work, but there is still scope for further streamlining and a need to cover such whole-school issues as numeracy and ICT.

50 Most subjects are managed well, but senior management has not, in the past, explained clearly enough what the role involves and several different approaches have evolved. Helping teachers achieve well by monitoring their work and supporting them if

necessary has begun, but is not yet well established although this was a key issue at the last inspection. In some subjects there are both heads of faculty and heads of departments, which blurs the lines of responsibility for improving performance. The co-ordinator for special educational needs shows good leadership and management in preparing individual education plans, ensuring that staff are aware of them and in setting up effective procedures for learning support. Learning support staff have a good level of training and provide good support. The senior management and class teachers make a good contribution to ensuring that provision for special educational needs is good. There is a link governor for special educational needs and the governors' monitoring of this area of work is satisfactory. Statutory requirements for special educational needs are fully met.

51 The governing body are strongly committed to the school and its Catholic ethos. They appreciate its strengths and also recognise the need to move forward and improve academic standards. They are well informed and keep a careful watch on expenditure, ensuring that money is spent wisely after careful consideration of alternatives. Together with senior staff in the school, they consult a range of people about important spending and ensure that resources are always obtained at the most reasonable price taking both cost and quality into account. The school uses resources to the best possible advantage for realising its aims and achieves good results, for example in the provision of high quality computers at modest costs. Special grants and extra funding are used imaginatively and effectively, for example in providing ICT training.

52 Administrative procedures are very effective and help the school function smoothly. Financial control is very secure and effective use is made of the ICT systems to monitor expenditure. There are well developed plans to adopt an integrated information system which will help teachers monitor attendance and also give access to a wide range of assessment and management information. Office staff contribute very effectively to the running of the school and support the school's special ethos through the warmth of the welcome they extend to visitors and the way they support pupils.

53 Staffing overall was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. The level of staffing is now satisfactory to good. In terms of qualifications and experience it is good in many subjects including English, science, modern foreign languages, humanities and religious education. All other subjects are appropriately staffed and there is very little teaching outside individuals' subject specialisms, although in science, whilst awaiting forthcoming appointments, some chemistry is taught by scientists whose first subject is not chemistry. There is effective support from technicians in science, ICT and resistant materials but none in food technology and textiles.

54 The current staffing structure is very top-heavy; there is a number of anomalies and very few women in senior posts. Seven of the eight most senior posts are held by men, one of whom currently has no teaching duties. There are only two women in the top 20 posts but of the 16 lower middle management posts, 12 are taken by women. The school is aware of these difficulties whose origins are historical and there is a plan to address them, but a complete solution must be long term. The rationale for the mathematics department structure is unclear, having both a head of faculty and a head of department, resulting in lack of clear accountability and responsibility for performance.

55 The last inspection report noted that statutory requirements for the appraisal of teachers were not being met. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching within departments has been variable in quality and effectiveness. A performance management strategy has been agreed by staff and is now being implemented following staff training at the start of the current term. The chosen strategy should support good practice much more consistently and is related well to individuals' training needs alongside the effective school policy which is

already used to identify training needs. The agreed lesson observation schedule does not sufficiently reflect pupils' learning and the quality and degree of challenge in tasks set for pupils. It is early days yet but the few staff interviewed gave very positive feedback on the process; the dialogue benefits small departments especially and helps to counter professional isolation.

56 There is a good policy for the induction of newly qualified teachers. It sets clear expectations both of the school's support and of those being supported. New teachers all spoke very highly of the help they are receiving both from within their departments and from the senior management and the staff as a whole. The school has close links with four teacher training institutions and regularly take students from them on school practice. Of those working in the school at the time of the inspection, nearly all were extremely enthusiastic about the way the whole school staff, the senior management and particularly their departmental colleagues gave them all the help and encouragement that they needed.

57 The school has made a number of improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection. These include a redecoration programme, remodelling of the design and technology suite, improvements to security and the provision of wiring for the computing system which has involved some minor internal alterations. All rooms were surveyed professionally during summer 2000 and this report, together with views on the future curriculum needs of the school, has been used by the governors to establish future priorities. Regular maintenance checks are made and improvement carried out, for example the use of non-shattering glass in ground floor rooms. The school has identified a number of priorities where the accommodation is adversely impacting on learning. These include the urgent need to refurbish the older science laboratories, and that many teaching classrooms are too small for the size of group, corridors are too narrow, the library is too small and is often used as a teaching space, music accommodation is only just adequate and more space is required for drama. At the time of the inspection the fabric of the building was generally in a good state of repair and the programme for improving the accommodation was considered to be sound. The space for sixth form study is too small as is the dining area which is also a social area and, on an increasing number of occasions, a teaching area.

58 Learning resources are inadequate in some areas even though the school has endeavoured to improve them since the last inspection, when it was a key issue. Expenditure on resources in the current year, as a proportion of the school's income, is high. Resources in English are good and in the majority of other subjects they are satisfactory, which is an improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection. In science and design and technology, however, they are unsatisfactory. Despite considerable recent investment, the ratio of computers per pupil remains below the national average and provision remains insufficient for ICT to be used effectively across the whole curriculum. The library and adjoining study area provides an attractive base for study. The range of fiction is good but there are too few up to date information books. Pupils value the journals provided and they provide up-to-date information for such subjects as politics and economics. However, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection, a relatively high proportion of the stock is old and is not being used or borrowed by pupils. Pupils do not have the opportunity to use or borrow videos or compact discs to support their studies. Additionally, the number of books available is well below the recommended level.

59 The last inspection report, in May 1996, identified nine areas for improvement. These have almost all been tackled successfully, particularly those that involved the quality of teaching, although there are still some shortages of resources. The school has maintained the quality of its pastoral support and its distinctive ethos, attendance has improved but examination results have not improved quickly enough, particularly at GCSE. Overall the school has made satisfactory progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to raise the quality of education even further, staff and governors should:

- (1) Ensure that results in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 improve. This will involve: -
 - improving the rate at which pupils make progress, particularly in mathematics and science, and also in English;
 - continuing to develop the use of assessment information to keep a close track on pupils' progress and to help them improve;
 - ensuring that teachers, when planning lessons, identify clear learning outcomes which are known and understood by the pupils;
 - revising the curriculum so that there are more alternatives to GCSE courses and that the statutory requirements for design and technology are met. (see paragraphs 4,5,18,22,23,37,38,62,75,78,84,137)
- (2) Improve the quality of the sixth form arrangements so that students achieve better results. This will involve: -
 - reviewing the way students are supported, making more use of assessment information, establishing higher expectations of attendance and better study habits;
 - revising the curriculum so that there are more alternatives to academic A level courses and that students are advised of the most suitable courses to follow;
 - creating a supervised study area, including reference material for student use. (see paragraphs 6,24,38)
- (3) Streamline and simplify the existing management structure. This will involve:-
 - clarifying individual responsibilities and setting targets for performance within the senior management team;
 - ensuring that there is whole-school co-ordination of numeracy;
 - resolving the overlap between departmental and faculty leadership;
 - clarifying the primary responsibilities and authority of heads of departments and other managers so that they focus on the core business of raising standards. (see paragraphs 49,50, 55,81,82, 83,131,132)

Together with the main issues identified above the school should also consider: -

- Producing a strategy for developing numeracy across the school. (see paragraphs 3, 19, 49, 84)
- Improving resources for learning in the areas pointed out in the report. (see paragraphs 58,132)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	167
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	47	30	1	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils on the school's roll	926
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	179	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	166	3

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	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	8.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.8
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	88	99	187

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	69	58	63
	Girls	74	58	57
	Total	143	116	120
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (65)	62 (54)	64 (52)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (20)	38 (20)	33 (20)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	64	53	61
	Girls	73	55	65
	Total	137	108	126
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (66)	58 (59)	67 (53)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (27)	35 (16)	36 (18)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	75	97	172

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	21	63	68
	Girls	37	92	94
	Total	58	155	162
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	34 (46)	90 (91)	94 (94)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.5 (36.1)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	48	43	91

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	13.1	12.1	12.5 (14.3)	1.1	0.9	1.1 (1.8)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	100
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	4
European (White)	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	921
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	136	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	287

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	0
Key Stage 3	23.0
Key Stage 4	24.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2639560
Total expenditure	2615820
Expenditure per pupil	2368
Balance brought forward from previous year	66806
Balance carried forward to next year	90546

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1074
Number of questionnaires returned	390

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	51	11	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	38	55	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	56	5	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	52	14	6	2
The teaching is good.	34	57	3	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	53	16	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	4	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	36	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	51	15	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	33	51	4	1	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	54	4	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	36	17	6	17

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

ENGLISH

61 Pupils' overall standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, when most pupils are 14 years old, is higher than that found nationally. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000 the percentage of pupils reaching at least the appropriate level or higher was above the national average. Pupils' attainment was above average and the highest in recent years. Boys' results were further above their own national average than girls' were above theirs. The school's performance in the tests was well above average in comparison with similar schools. With pupils' general standard of literacy on entry close to the national average good progress is made by the end of Key Stage 3.

62 The general standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is somewhat below that found nationally. In the GCSE results in 2000 for English language the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* - C was below the national average. A number of scripts were submitted for re-marking and were up-graded. The average points scores of boys and girls were similar amounts below their respective national averages. In English literature results were in line with the national average. Overall performance in both subjects is better than that in several other subjects in the school. By the end of Key Stage 4, however, pupils do not maintain the good progress made during Key Stage 3.

63 The overall standard of attainment in the sixth form is below course expectation, to some extent reflecting the relatively low results some students achieved at GCSE. In the GCE A level for English literature all students achieved at least a grade E but the percentage achieving the top grades was below the national average. Performance in English language was well below average with no high grades.

64 The great majority of pupils throughout the school listen attentively. They work sensibly and productively in pairs and small groups. The overall quality of speech is in line with that found nationally. By the end of Key Stage 3 almost all pupils use the spoken form of standard English. In their discussion of the difference between cinema and stage productions of *Romeo and Juliet* as part of an assignment on the media, high attaining pupils in Year 11 made articulate, relevant and, sometimes, extended contributions. Pupils in Year 7 talked enthusiastically to the class about books they had read recently and others in the same year rehearsed and performed a lively and successful choral speaking of a poem. Students in the sixth form spoke with sensitivity and understanding of social issues in Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads*. When talking to adults, pupils throughout the school are courteous, confident and informative.

65 The standard of reading in Year 7 is somewhat above that generally found. Pupils read fluently and with understanding from their personal reading books. Virtually all pupils read well enough to be able to comprehend the wide range of literature which they encounter though all the key stages. The school's literacy policy ensures that all pupils have lessons in the library to enrich and broaden their reading. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 keep detailed records and reviews of their reading which show that they read more widely than pupils in many schools. In Year 9 pupils studying *Twelfth Night* have a sound grasp of key features of plot, character and themes in the play. Pupils in Year 7 have a good understanding of rhyme and rhythm in their choral speaking of *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes. Standards of reading remain good at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

66 Written work throughout the school is, in the main, carefully presented with proper attention given to handwriting. By the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of written work is higher than average. There are wide variations in the level of accuracy but the majority of pupils construct sentences accurately and express ideas coherently. Pupils draft their work effectively and use word processing to assist this process. Throughout the school pupils write appropriately for a range of purposes. Pupils in Year 7 write interesting and perceptive reviews of books they have read. Some of the best writing in Year 9 springs from the study of their Shakespeare play. By the end of Key Stage 4 high attaining pupils produce examination assignments of a high standard which are carefully planned, imaginative in content, skilfully crafted, fluently expressed and technically accurate. The work of some average and low attaining pupils, however, contains errors in sentence structure, in the expression of ideas and in the use of spelling and punctuation. The overall standard of written work at the end of Key Stage 4 does not show such sound progress as that achieved at the end of Key Stage 3. The great majority of pupils throughout the school are well motivated and eager to learn. They collaborate effectively when working together and show patience and tolerance of the views and opinions of others. Relationships in the classroom are positive and mutually respectful. The uniformly good behaviour of pupils in lessons is a strength of the department. Sixth form students have a mature attitude towards their studies and pupils throughout the school show sensitivity and awareness when discussing spiritual and moral issues. In conversation pupils are pleasant and articulate.

67 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is good, and sometimes better, in almost all lessons. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in all lessons and very good in one third. In the sixth form teaching is good in all lessons. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good with especially high academic standards in the sixth form. Lessons are planned and prepared very thoroughly. Classroom management is very good. Teachers question pupils skilfully, drawing relevant answers from them and pressing for justification and elaboration of opinions expressed. Tasks are carefully matched to pupils' level of attainment, with appropriate work provided for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers generally provide lively and stimulating lessons and use a range of methods and approaches. Occasionally teachers talk beyond the attention span of pupils but, in the main, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Very rarely high attaining pupils, at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, are not sufficiently challenged. In all lessons teachers create purposeful attitudes and relationships. At the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 teachers prepare pupils very thoroughly for tests and examinations, paying particular attention to details of technique. Pupils' work is conscientiously and consistently marked with much positive comment.

68 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Departmental documentation is very thorough. The literacy policy, which builds upon the work done in feeder primary schools, is carefully integrated into schemes of work. Pupils with special educational needs, who are withdrawn from some lessons, cover fully the requirements of the National Curriculum and settle back successfully into their form groups when they are ready. This is a marked improvement upon the findings of the last report. The department is well led and teachers are well qualified and share lengthy and valuable experience. There are plans to improve the provision for the use of ICT in the very near future with the inclusion of computers in each classroom. Accommodation is generally satisfactory with much attractive work on display but there are insufficient rooms for all teachers and one or two lead a nomadic existence which wastes both time and energy. Staff share a clear sense of purpose and the department is very well managed.

Literacy

69 In all other subjects across the curriculum the general standard of listening is above that found nationally. Planned and carefully structured use of discussion is not widely used

as an essential way of learning. In some subjects such as history, answers tend to be brief but in art and personal and social education pupils are encouraged to speak freely and at length. By the end of Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils use the spoken form of standard English but in many subjects this strength is not properly deployed and exploited. The great majority of pupils read well enough to enable them to understand textbooks and other materials. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud in science and history. Some departments have responded positively to the school's literacy policy and, in ICT and physical education, particular attention is paid to the use of the specific terminology of the subject. They read for research and to extend their knowledge in history, geography and art, but in the majority of subjects there is little encouragement for extended reading. The limited quality of subject sections in the library does not encourage reading for research.

70 The quality of presentation of written work in most departments is, on the whole, good. In design and technology pupils are encouraged to produce longer pieces of writing and in history, modern foreign languages and business studies in the sixth form pupils present longer written assignments. Good use is made, across the curriculum, of word processing to improve the quality of presentation and accuracy of written work. Much effort has been invested in the whole school literacy policy and staff training has taken place but not all departments have, as yet, absorbed good practice into their curriculum.

Drama

71 Pupils in Year 7 establish a sound foundation to their work in drama. They work with energy and enthusiasm and co-operate well in group work. Their speech is generally audible and fluent as, for example, when justifying their application for membership of the crew of a spaceship. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow a GCSE course. Pupils respond well to the good training they receive in a range of basic skills. They work well together in pairs and small groups, developing good sequences and using movement, mime and language effectively. They listen patiently and arrive at quickly agreed conclusions. The overall standard of work is close to that found nationally. In the GCSE examinations in 2000 results were below the national average but pupils did better in drama than they did in a number of other subjects.

72 Teaching is good and relationships in the studio are very positive. Teachers are enthusiastic and are skilled in motivating pupils who, consequently, respond with evident enjoyment. Good schemes of work are in place so that a good range of work is covered.

73 There is, however, a weakness in curriculum continuity in the subject. During Year 7 and Year 8 drama is taught for half of each term alternating with ICT. In Year 9 no drama is taught. This means that pupils start their GCSE course in Year 10 having missed a crucial year of development. Accommodation is good so that pupils can experiment with different settings for their work. Drama makes a valuable contribution to extra-curricular activities especially with large-scale productions. The subject is very well managed.

MATHEMATICS

74 The standards of attainment on entry to the school are in line with the national averages. Standards by the age of 14 are also broadly in line with national averages, with most pupils making satisfactory progress. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, 62 percent of pupils gained level 5 and above. This is slightly below the 65 percent achieved in all schools. Similarly, 38 percent of pupils achieved level 6 and above, and this is also below the 42 percent achieved nationally. Inspection findings confirm the test results. Standards seen in classrooms are broadly in line with those in schools with pupils from similar backgrounds.

75 Standards attained by pupils aged 16 in GCSE examinations are below the national average for all schools. Inspection findings indicate that the progress made by the majority of pupils in lessons is usually satisfactory.

76 Standards in the sixth form are below expectations. In 2000 only three quarters of those who entered the A level examination achieved a grade E or above. Progress for a significant minority of students is therefore unsatisfactory.

77 Since the last inspection standards at Key Stage 3 have remained just below the national averages, but they are improving. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently in some lessons, while the lower attaining pupils sometimes do not follow teachers' explanations. Some teachers do not successfully match the work to the needs of individual pupils. This means that some pupils are under-achieving, even though they are invariably well behaved and keen to learn. Pupils with special educational needs, for whom a provision is made by the learning support department, make satisfactory progress.

78 At the last inspection standards at Key Stage 4 were judged to be in line with national expectations, and higher than standards of achievement in Key Stage 3. This is no longer the case. Over the last five years achievement at grades A* to C has varied between 36 percent and the 32 percent attained in 2000, while the national figure has risen to over 47 percent. Boys and girls compare unfavourably with their respective national averages. For example, in 2000 the number of boys attaining A* to C grades was only half the figure nationally. The achievement of girls is better than boys though it is also below average overall. At GCSE, mathematics is one of the least successful subjects in the school, though targets are met. Too few pupils attain the higher levels A* or A. In 2000, three pupils entered the GCSE examination at the end of Year 10, and performed very well achieving grades A and A*. The expectations of some teachers are not high enough, even though the vast majority of pupils are well behaved and eager to learn. The older girls, for example, are confident to ask for help if they need it and show very mature attitudes. They want to do well.

79 Standards in the sixth form have improved over the last three years, but every year too many students leave the school not having achieved a pass grade at A level. Inspection findings show that students are fulfilling course requirements, but many have relatively modest GCSE results to build on.

80 Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory. It has improved since reported at the last inspection, especially at Key Stage 3. Far fewer unsatisfactory lessons were observed in this inspection, though few lessons were judged to be good or better. Some teachers do not cope effectively with classes that have a wide range of ability. Where teachers interest pupils they respond very well, as in a lesson on probability where the teacher's inventive use of resources and realistic examples overcame pupils' initial misgivings about the topic. Where teachers set tasks that interest pupils they also respond very positively, as in a lesson where pupils produced a spreadsheet to show whether it was best to receive a gift from an elderly relative as a lump sum, a smaller sum but over several years, or a couple of other options. Relationships are usually good. There is a positive working atmosphere in most lessons, but the management of older pupils is not always secure, and some boys under-achieve, taking very little pride in their work. This, as well as lateness to lessons, is not challenged enough by staff. Teachers usually use good subject knowledge, with a beneficial effect on pupils' appreciation of the importance of step-by-step approaches and attention to detail. Clear learning objectives are not always made explicit to pupils, and planning does not focus enough on what teachers expect different pupils to learn by the end of the lesson. Pupils sometimes work too slowly because they are not set deadlines within lessons. Teachers'

use of questioning to involve large numbers of pupils in recapping prior learning and the extension of ideas into new areas is good. Marking is usually regular, but pupils are not always explicitly told what they need to do to improve their work. Reports to parents are sometimes not informative enough and targets set are too vague. Some teachers do too little to make their classrooms stimulating. Others do so well, and have displays of pupils' work which stimulate their interest in the subject. Provision for the use of ICT is satisfactory, and there are some very good features, as in Year 10 when the pupils really enjoy working with computers.

81 While day-to-day management is sound, the existing management structure has not enabled enough attention to be focussed on raising standards. Insufficient attention is given to teaching styles, and to issues that will raise standards. There is still a need for greater monitoring of the quality of work that is done in workbooks, an issue that was identified in the last inspection. The pupils are demonstrating, through their positive behaviour and attitude to the subject that they could achieve much better than they are doing in some lessons. The use of assessment procedures is not enabling pupils to make the rate of progress of which they are capable.

82 Overall, since the last inspection insufficient progress has been made in raising standards. There is still some under-achievement by the age of 14, as reported at the last inspection, and the changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum are, so far, not proving successful. Standards achieved by some pupils are too low by the time pupils leave the school.

Numeracy

83 No one has taken responsibility for developing numeracy across the school. The school has no policy for the development of numeracy across the school. There is little evidence of numeracy skills improving pupils' performance across a wide range of subjects, and pupils make little use of numeracy skills to help their understanding in different subjects. The monitoring of teaching numeracy, and the evaluation of strategies used, is unsatisfactory. Pupils' numeracy skills are underdeveloped throughout the school and do not steadily improve over time since pupils are given few planned opportunities to develop these skills in lessons.

SCIENCE

84 Standards at Key Stage 3 are slightly above the national average and have shown steady improvement in the last four years. This improvement has largely been achieved because boys' attainment has improved. Girls have maintained levels in line with national averages. At Key Stage 4 all pupils are entered for dual award science. Two examination boards are used, with lower attaining groups following a course that is assessed at the end of each module. Standards have risen in three of the past four years but GCSE results remain well below the national average. A development plan to support science is in place and standards being achieved during lessons are now higher than suggested by past examination performance. A level courses are offered in all three sciences and results in all subjects are similar with better than average grades being achieved. However, group sizes and subject entries are small.

85 In Key Stage 3 pupils use a published scheme as a core text but their work is supported by material taken from other commercial schemes and teacher produced worksheets, particularly for experimental work. By the end of the key stage pupils are confident in handling basic apparatus and are able to record measurements, display data in a

variety of ways and formulate conclusions. They have respect for living things and the environment. Worksheets are matched to the level of pupils' attainments and one pupil with a learning difficulty successfully completed the worksheet on a computer. Practical exercises, such as the determination of the reactivity series for metals with a Year 8 group, are usually structured so that pupils have the opportunity to synthesise data from demonstrations and small group exercises. Year 8 pupils showed a good understanding of some basic chemical reactions and how these could be expressed as equations. The quality of pupils' diagrams and explanations were variable and would be enhanced if a larger size of exercise book were available. Homework booklets are available for most of the topics and provide good reinforcement opportunities and practice at answering national test questions. There should, however, be more demanding homework tasks set for the most able.

86 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are able to understand fairly complex ideas such as genetics, photosynthesis, electromagnetic waves and gravitation. They have good confidence in the interpretation of the measurement of electrical energy in a Year 10 class and the determination of gradients of straight line graphs. Basic calculations involving the substitution of physical quantities into equations were seen with a middle set studying power and there were references to the manipulation of equations in other contexts. Linkage between quantitative measurements, the use of algebra and work in mathematics classes should be developed further. Pupils are not regularly being involved in the design of investigations and so do not develop their skills sufficiently in this area.

87 In the sixth form students demonstrated a sophisticated interpretation of complex graphs, for example to understand the working of heart valves in a Year 12 class, and showed a good appreciation of the mathematical basis of the kinetic theory of matter. They respond well to teacher questioning which, because of the small size of groups, is often individualised.

88 The science faculty has a well-formulated action plan for development and has addressed many of the issues identified during the last inspection. Pupils' behaviour in all lessons is now good, teachers are confident in using a variety of teaching styles, there is effective curriculum development taking place in Key Stage 3 using national advice, modern textbooks are now available to support teaching, good systems for monitoring the progress of pupils and target setting are in place, blinds have been installed in some rooms and capitation has been increased for the purchase of equipment, books and computing facilities. There remains however a need to continue to invest in equipment and computers. At present there are only sufficient textbooks for use in the school. Pupils in Key Stage 4 would benefit by having a textbook that they can take home for homework and wider reading. They need to be able to read about a topic before their lessons and to use the books to reinforce their understanding of how topics link and reinforce each other. This is particularly important as the Dual Award syllabus includes a large number of topics that pupils may perceive as being isolated from each other. Textbooks would also give teachers more flexibility in setting homework tasks. The four older laboratories do not provide a satisfactory learning environment and their refurbishment is a priority.

89 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, which is an improvement on the last inspection. In the best lessons there were clear learning objectives which were made known to the class and their achievement monitored at the end of the lesson. Teachers used a variety of teaching techniques and questioning that extended the thinking of pupils, and they related the topic to everyday applications. Effective use of Internet based material was made during an electricity lesson and video sequences supported learning in several lessons. Teachers' demonstrations were well directed towards the achievement of understanding of principles and the development of scientific ideas. The best lessons also included practical activities for small groups of pupils, made good use of the time available and stressed the

links between past and future work. However, in some lessons there was a shortage of modern equipment which restricted the learning experiences of pupils, or the full range of learning resources available in the school were not used by the teacher. Some lessons did not give enough emphasis to developing the importance of science as a process of enquiry in which hypotheses are formulated and tested rather than presenting science as a body of knowledge. The department currently has two vacancies and the temporary teachers are not as effective as the permanent staff.

90 Pupils' responses and the quality of learning were at least sound and mostly good in all of the lessons visited. They were able to follow briefing sheets, and worked safely and co-operatively with each other in practical situations, with a sense of purpose. A briefing sheet that included a sequence of diagrams for starch testing was particularly successful with a Year 9 class in helping them carry out the tasks and understand what was happening. Where pupils were required to build up conceptual understanding from different perspectives, for example for the electromagnetic spectrum, or natural/artificial selection, they had good concentration and interest. In lessons where pupils were having their understanding stretched above the minimum level, for example in neutralisation of acids with a lower Year 11 group, they responded well to the intellectual challenge. Attitudes towards learning in lessons were generally very good. Pupils co-operated well in practical work, observed safety rules and maintained concentration for the duration of the lesson. While responding well to teachers questions few pupils asked questions. Opportunities for reinforcing ideas that link aspects of the whole curriculum, for example the fate of Galileo in a lesson on astronomy (spiritual), concepts of proportion and manipulating equations in a lesson on electric power (mathematics), the reduction of iron oxide in the blast furnace (geography and history) were not all taken or recognised. All have the potential for discussion and debate, and so help to promote the wider contribution of science in the curriculum and to society. Not enough is done to try to develop a critical approach to the content of topics and to foster enquiry.

91 The faculty has responded positively to the challenges faced following the last inspection and is now at a potentially exciting stage of development. The commitment of the school to the refurbishment of laboratories, the rapidly expanding use of ICT and the use of new equipment should all help to revitalise the subject and make it more popular with pupils with a positive effect on the raising of standards. Staff are well qualified and have many strengths as teachers. They are well led by the head of faculty who is committed to implementing the changes necessary to improve the position of science education in the school. The existing links with professional associations, scientific institutions and university departments need to be developed further so that the department might benefit from external funding, involvement in curriculum projects regionally and nationally, and share expertise in science education.

ART AND DESIGN

92 Standards in art are high by the end of Key Stage 3. A significant feature of these standards is that there are very few pupils who do not achieve at least average standards in most units of work. These standards are directly related to good and often very good teaching. Pupils are taught the skills of drawing and painting formally. In Year 7 formal studies on portrait heads and formal studies of the theory and composition of colour lead pupils to have a good knowledge and understanding of the basic skills in art. They build successfully on these skills and make good progress from year to year.

93 In Year 7 pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs in their studies of masks. This is done in good depth. In Year 8 pupils work in great detail on their project on Egyptian Art, aware of the range of motifs used but not always the significance of these. In Year 9 pupils

are very successful in their three-dimensional compositions based on studies of fish as used by other artists. Three-dimensional work is bold and dramatic in all years. There are a few instances where drawing and painting lacks flair; more scope could be given to high attaining pupils to experiment more. There is not enough emphasis on links with the work of major artists throughout some units of work to give pupils an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant history of art.

94 Standards in GCSE have been rising over the past three years, from the national average to well above the national average in 2000. Work in the present Years 10 and 11 is slightly above the national average with Year 10 showing particularly good potential in their graphics design project. Year 11 were completing the eighth hour of the GCSE terminal examination during the inspection. Standards are slightly above the national average. Work is imaginative and much of it is developed into three dimensions. Pupils are well aware of the effects and impact of colour and apply colour with thought and care. Where pupils respond in drawing the use of tone and texture is good and there is a good awareness of light and shade. Pupils' responses are generally strong and vibrant. Research is done in good depth. Pupils' work and standards are again related to good and very good teaching. There is good progress evident throughout the course.

95 Standards at A level have been rising over the past three years and were well above average in 2000. All students gained a pass grade and two of the six candidates achieved A grades. Standards in the present Years 12 and 13 are again above average. Students research their topics in very good depth, making good use of the Internet. They make careful notes to explain the development of their work. Students are quietly confident and can speak at length when explaining what they have learned from research and how they are using their research to gain inspiration for their own work. They make good progress throughout the course.

96 All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, get individual attention in all lessons and this contributes to good progress for all.

97 Pupils have very good attitudes to this subject in all years. They are generally quiet and attentive in lessons and they work with a clear sense of purpose. They are confident and composed as they speak about their work. Art is a popular subject. A greater than average percentage of students take art at GCSE, A/S and A level. There is a significant increase in the numbers taking art in the present Years 10 and 11.

98 Teaching is good with almost half of the lessons judged very good. All teachers have very good class-management skills and organise their lessons very well. A significant factor contributing to teaching is the very good planning. Schemes of work are written in detail and are well illustrated. All units of work are very well structured to ensure pupils make logical progress. The basic skills and the design process are taught formally and in good detail. Homework is an integral part of all units of work. It is carefully planned and prepared by the teachers. It is generally well done and adds significantly to students' success in all years. There is excellent use of sketchbooks for research and preparation in Year 7, and in GCSE and A/S and A level.

99 Assessment is thorough. From Year 7 onwards students have record booklets in which their progress is recorded. Day-to-day assessment in almost all lessons involves pupils in assessment of their own and others' work. This adds to their knowledge and understanding.

100 Teachers support students' learning by keeping the art rooms open every lunchtime to give students opportunities to add to their work. There is also an art club after school on one day a week for examination students.

101 The head of department is energetic, enthusiastic and committed to the subject. He maintains good links with the local community and responds generously to requests for help with regard to designs and illustrations for projects. He has recently done major workshop sessions for local students on behalf of a national charity. He is painting the scenery for the school's forthcoming production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He maintains good links with the major feeder school, giving demonstration lessons. Art has a high profile within the school. There are extensive exhibitions of students' work throughout the school. These greatly enhance the school environment and are a source of inspiration to students.

102 All the good features reported at the time of the last inspection are maintained, and the few shortcomings have been rectified. There is a significant improvement in the use of ICT in both research and the development of students' work. There is a significant improvement in GCSE results. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example the work they do on Egypt helps develop their appreciation of other cultures and times. .

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103 By the age of Key Stage 3, standards overall are in line with the national expectation. Teacher assessments indicate standards which are significantly above the national average at the expected level and higher for 2000. However, lesson observation and analysis of pupils' work across the lower school indicate average levels of achievement. The tightly structured tasks and an over-emphasis on the use of worksheets restricts attainment in the design aspects of the course. These tasks do not always make realistic demands and limit the pupil's opportunities to make real discoveries and decide how to develop the work in their own way. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with their ability, through the support of the teachers and the good work of the learning support assistants.

104 Standards at GCSE level in 2000 are significantly better than both the school average and the national average. In 2000 A* - C grades in textiles and electronic products were significantly better than the national average. Girls attain higher standards than boys do. Project design folders are systematically developed in all material areas. Design skills, drawing techniques and the use of modelling to develop ideas, however, are weak across all material areas except textiles, where they are good. Pupils use a limited range of ideas to help them develop their product designs and too little use is made of evaluation to develop designs. Knowledge and understanding of materials and processes are generally satisfactory but vary between material areas. The aspect of making is good and pupils produce quality products. The use of ICT to enhance the quality of work is beginning to emerge. In A level textiles standards are generally in line with course expectations and students achieve relative to their ability. Students are also offered product design in the sixth form.

105 The quality of teaching overall is good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. It is better in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, with most of the satisfactory teaching occurring in lessons in Key Stage 3. Lesson planning, organisation and good subject knowledge is a strength. Where teaching is good the teacher introduces new knowledge and reinforces existing learning, through a well-organised series of activities. For example, the teacher explained and demonstrated the technique of heat transfer as a method of colouring fabrics. Pupils then had a go at transferring patterns from coloured wrapping

paper on to fabrics. They then used this knowledge to create their own two dimensional design ideas for fabric patterns. Knowledge and understanding were reinforced well through questioning. Where teaching is less effective the teacher does not put the onus on pupils to think for themselves and provide possible solutions. In these lessons greater use needs to be made of a range of information sources to inspire pupils and help them to develop ideas. Good displays, however, set the standards to which pupils should be aiming. Pupils, especially the more able, would benefit from the use of a wider range of teaching strategies, giving them more responsibility for their own learning, and making them less dependent on the instructions of the teacher. Teachers do not make enough use of product analysis and investigative work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding. More use needs to be made of end of project assessment to set targets for individual pupils and of assessment of learning during lessons to inform planning and inject pace.

106 Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Pupils often collaborate with each other in their learning, in using equipment and in clearing up at the end of lessons. Where attitudes are poor, this arises from a lack of challenge and stimulus in lessons, which builds up over time.

107 The curriculum provides a range of experience of materials in both key stages, and A level textiles and product design in the sixth form. In Key Stage 4, however, design and technology is offered as an option, with about half the pupils following GCSE courses. This is in breach of statutory requirements. Opportunities for the use of ICT include a unit on control in Year 8. It is used by a small number of pupils in Key Stage 4, but it needs to go beyond word processing and data analysis, with more development in the use of two dimensional computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM), three dimensional modelling and electronic circuit simulation. The faculty has good links with local industry to enable pupils to develop an understanding of industrial practices. There is a lack of provision for pupils to develop an understanding of the design and technological activity of different cultures. There is a drive to develop literacy through the subject. The identification and use of keywords to include common and technical terms is providing a good reference for pupils, but there is little work to develop pupils' numeracy.

108 The head of faculty provides good support for design and technology, working with the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 co-ordinators. All staff work together as a team and there is a high level of commitment. There is regular monitoring of the work within the subject and of the quality of teaching and learning. Effective subject reviews and development plans are produced, linked to the school development plan. A recording system for assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress has been devised and is being applied by all teachers. This is used as a basis for determining levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3. There is, however, a greater need for formative assessments to set individual targets for pupils and inform planning. The use of examination and national test data to predict performance is developing. Schemes of work are now detailed, following comments in the last report. The accommodation and equipment is generally old and in some instances in poor condition. It does not reflect a modern design and technological image for pupils to aspire to. Provision for systems and control and CAD/CAM are inadequate. These inadequacies, however, are to be addressed in the coming year and funding has been allocated for the major refurbishment of design and technology areas. There is good technician support for resistant materials but none for food technology and textiles. Funding for materials, equipment and textbooks is inadequate to support the quality and provision of design and technology, and there is an over dependence on parents to provide ingredients in food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

109 In the year 2000, teachers assessed the attainment of pupils at age 14 as being broadly in line with that found nationally. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the level of A* to C passes was below average but the overall pass rate at A* to G was broadly in line with the national average. The average points score was close to that found nationally. Girls performed significantly less well than boys at GCSE. Fewer girls opt to continue with the subject in Years 10 and 11, and those that do are generally not the highest attaining girls in the year group. Results in geography at GCSE are above those for most other subjects in the school. There were too few students entered for GCE A level examination to make statistical comparisons valid against national averages.

110 In general, pupils' attainment in geography is below average when they come to the school. In work seen during the inspection standards are close to the average at age 14, and in line with those expected of pupils at age 16. Standards in the sixth form are in line with course expectations. Overall pupils achieve well. Inspection evidence suggests that there is no wide gap in attainment between girls and boys especially at Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and attain appropriate standards in relation to their prior attainment. Attainment is rising over time.

111 By age 14, pupils have acquired a sound geographical vocabulary. Pupils in Year 7, for example, use and understand such terms as Gondwanaland, plate tectonics and continental drift when they learn about earthquakes and volcanoes. Pupils understand geographical patterns and can explain the links between the environment and its effects on human activity. This is demonstrated by pupils in Year 9 who produce good work on how industrial development in Japan has managed to cope with the difficult terrain, the lack of natural resources and the earthquakes and volcanoes which are such a feature of the region. Pupils are developing the important geographical skills of looking for evidence and the interpretation of it. Pupils in Year 8, for example, carried out a survey into local traffic patterns which led them into discussions about the patterns that appeared, and what the effects were. A criticism from the last inspection was that pupils did not develop their mapping skills very well. This has been corrected and pupils routinely draw good, accurate maps as part of their work.

112 By age 16, the skills learned in previous years have been further extended in preparation for GCSE. Pupils develop a good knowledge of geographical patterns on the world scale. In Year 10, for example, pupils develop an overview of the physical and human geography factors that affect the distribution of population on a world wide scale. Pupils in Year 11 study the push and pull factors that affect industrial growth both on the world scale and in the United Kingdom. They develop good understanding of, for example, the traditional and modern industrial development in Britain.

113 Students in the sixth form have good independent learning skills. Students in Year 12, who are preparing for their AS-level examination, produce good research work on the gentrification of a part of Manchester as part of their studies into population movements. These students are able to write coherently at length, and assemble a good base of evidence to support their ideas and hypotheses. Students in Year 13 also produce well-researched pieces of extended writing on such topics as population movements and the major eruption of Mount St. Helens. Pupils are able to absorb the large amount of factual material that is supplied by teachers to develop their understanding of the subject. There is an encouraging increase in the number of students who have opted to study geography in Year 12.

114 The quality of teaching, and the learning it promotes, is good. There is good, or very good, teaching in just under two-thirds of the lessons with very good teaching in two-fifths. There is a slightly higher proportion of good and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Teaching is satisfactory in slightly over one-third of the lessons. No

unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. A significant feature of all of the teaching is very good class control that is achieved without fuss and with good humour. Pupils and teachers have a high level of respect for each other and this leads to a relaxed and purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Pupils respond to this with good behaviour in class and with very good attitudes to work. They are conscientious over their work, make good contributions to discussions and show good levels of concentration and interest in lessons. Relevant homework is regularly set. Where teaching is at its best the teacher has very good subject knowledge, not only of the factual materials, but also of the techniques for improving performance in tests and examinations so pupils learn how to maximise their results. This is coupled with very good teaching methods that include the use of assessment to identify pupils' needs and taking steps to correct any weaknesses that may be apparent. In these lessons the pace is brisk and activities move on quickly to keep pupils busy and maintain the pace of learning. Occasionally teachers miss opportunities to provide work that is appropriate to the wide range of attainment found in most classes. This is seen, for example, where teachers write notes on the board, sometimes at great length, for the whole class to copy. Although this transmits information, it does not necessarily guarantee that pupils have learned it. It also restricts opportunities for higher attaining pupils, in particular, to extend their own writing skills. In some lessons there are aspects of technique which lead to a slight loss of time. For example, time is spent repeating notes on the board when information could be photocopied or presented with an overhead projector so that there is no necessity for repeating it with each class.

115 The subject makes a good contribution to teaching basic skills. There is a good contribution to pupils' literacy development through the emphasis on key words in lessons and on the use of geographical terms. Pupils' work is regularly marked and punctuation and spelling errors are corrected. There is also a good numeracy element in many lessons where pupils routinely use graphs and tables to present evidence and for finding information. They also frequently use scales to interpret maps and measure distances. The use of ICT is good and pupils use computers to edit and produce their work as well as for finding information. Pupils in Year 8, for instance, made good use of computers to produce colourful and well-written projects on Brazil. Particularly good work was seen where Year 12 pupils made good use of the Internet for research, scanned the information on to discs and presented it to the class through a projector.

116 There are a number of field courses and trips each year that help to enrich the curriculum and raise attainment. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In many lessons pupils have opportunities to reflect on their environment and to appreciate the wonders of nature and of the world. This is clear, for example, in work done on earthquakes and volcanoes. A strong moral dimension is found in lessons where pupils are taught right from wrong and to respect the views of others. The teachers provide good role models. There are good opportunities for social development when pupils are out of school on trips and field courses. The in-built cultural element about people from other countries provides good cultural development. A good example of this is clearly seen in pupils' work on Brazil. The scheme of work is good and provides a progressive and comprehensive course for pupils. There are effective assessment procedures in place. Good use is made of the data provided to track pupils' attainment and progress, to check for differences between groups of pupils, and to set targets both for the subject and for individual pupils. There is good monitoring and support of teaching and this ensures that best practice is shared throughout the department. The accommodation provides a clean, pleasant working environment. The department is well run and administered. The quality of leadership in the department is good and weaknesses mentioned in the last report have been addressed and standards raised. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

HISTORY

117 The proportion of pupils attaining grades A* - C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was in line with the national average and overall performances, taking other grades into account, were better than average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results achieved in history by both boys and girls were above the average for all the subjects in the school and boys performed better in history than they did in other subjects. Results attained were consistent with those achieved in the two previous years. Results at A level in 2000 were below expectation for the course nationally. In 1999 results were above the national expectation and in 1998 they were in line with it.

118 The inspection judgement is that attainment by the ages of 14 and 16 is in line with the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Currently, students in their first year of the sixth form are performing below the national expectation for the course. When pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, achievement is good by the ages of 14 and 16 and is satisfactory by the age of 18.

119 By the age of 14 pupils have a sound understanding of chronology and are able to place events in time. Year 7 pupils, for example, understand such terms as 'millennium' and 'decade' and are able to place in sequence developments following the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Their vocabulary continues to grow during the key stage. Pupils acquire skills in using different sources of evidence, including pictures, the origins of place-names and the terms that were used to define social positions as a means of interpreting the past, though the sometimes restricted range of evidence used reduces the attainment of higher attaining pupils. Pupils also study the concept of revolution and are able to explain it in relation to the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution. Higher attaining pupils write expressively about the morality of Edwardian society and produce good empathetic writing on a range of themes. Lower attainers find difficulty in assimilating all the information given in lessons and a number are unable to explain the meaning of words they have had explained to them in the previous lesson.

120 By the age of 16 pupils have a good level of knowledge on such topics as the impact of the Treaty of Versailles upon the economic and political life of Germany after 1919. They also go on to become more skilled in the interpretation of evidence. A good lesson was seen in Year 10, for example, in which pupils explored the extent to which cartoons could be viewed as valid evidence. They were able to draw upon their own knowledge of the period and were quick to identify bias. In a Year 11 lesson pupils displayed considerable subtlety when examining the letters of a First World War soldier and trying to decide the extent to which people at that time were influenced by government propaganda or by their own idealism and vision of war. Though most pupils are able to produce concise and reasoned written work, lower attainers often rely upon producing a narrative of events rather than an analysis of them.

121 By the age of 18, students acquire a sound knowledge of topics they have studied. In considering the economy of the 1930s, for example, they were able to explain why some parts of the country experienced relative prosperity whilst in others there was severe hardship. Most students make a satisfactory oral contribution to lessons. However, whilst higher attaining students communicate effectively in writing, middle and lower attainers have not developed their skills to the extent that might be expected.

122 The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 11 and is satisfactory in Years 12 and 13. Some excellent teaching was seen in Year 11. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence.

Teachers plan lessons well, both individually and as sequences, which means that pupils have a clear sense of direction. Time is used efficiently. Teachers explain to pupils what is to be covered in the lesson, a brisk pace is maintained, pupils concentrate upon the tasks they are set and a purposeful atmosphere is created. Teachers have good subject knowledge, as was seen, for example, when a teacher talked through the major international events of the period 1919 to 1939 with a Year 10 class. Pupils were able to take an overview of the period and felt encouraged to offer their own comments on the relative importance of events and the links between them. When teachers have high expectations pupils respond by making a good intellectual effort. This was seen, for example, in a Year 7 lesson on the medieval village, in which pupils were keen to understand relationships and obligations under the feudal system. Teachers maintain good discipline and so create an environment in which learning can take place. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. When teaching is less effective, the attainment of pupils is not sufficiently taken into account by teachers and this results in higher attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged and lower attainers not sufficiently developing their understanding. Whilst pupils are usually keen to participate in class discussion, they are not always required to consolidate their understanding by, for example, carefully and fully recording what they have learned in writing. The quality of marking is variable. At best, it is detailed, pays good attention to basic accuracy and tells pupils what they need to do to improve. Marking is least helpful to pupils when many errors are overlooked and little or no guidance is given as to the pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

123 Attainment is similar to what it was at the time of the last inspection. Teaching and learning has improved. The monitoring of pupils' progress has improved but still lacks consistency in Years 7 to 9. The stock of textbooks has improved and the use of fieldwork has been extended so that pupils have a richer experience of the subject. Insufficient use is still being made of ICT. Overall, progress has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124 Results in teachers' assessments of information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 3 are above the national average, and similar to the results in summer 2000. At Key Stage 4, results at GCSE are also above the national average for pupils achieving A* - C grades. In A level computer studies, all candidates at the school passed against a national figure of 85 percent, though in A level information technology (IT), results this year were below the national average.

125 Taken all together, the department is achieving high standards, relative to other subjects, against national benchmarks and for all groups of pupils. Standards of attainment observed in lessons and pupils' work are high throughout the school. At Key Stage 3, from Year 7 onwards, pupils are encouraged to develop as independent users of technology. They can confidently create databases, use word processors and develop spreadsheets. They are able to discuss the advantages of particular programs for particular tasks and are given the opportunity to reflect on wider issues relating to ICT in society. They confidently contribute to discussions, using technical vocabulary accurately.

126 At Key Stage 4 those pupils studying GCSE IT, which amounts to about half the year group, deepen and extend their existing knowledge, skills and understanding through a series of well planned projects. Those not studying for GCSE are given the opportunity to develop their skills in units delivered through English and mathematics, and while all pupils at both key stages receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum, in the case of these pupils it needs more co-ordination for them to extend their skills in ICT thoroughly.

127 At Key Stage 3, the course in Years 7 and 8 ensures good coverage of the National Curriculum requirements, but this is achieved despite the low allocation of time to the subject, only 18 hours in each of these years, compared to nationally agreed recommendations of 36 hours. In Year 9 the situation is worse, with only 12 hours allocated, all of it taught through units in English, mathematics and science lessons rather than through a distinct course, and while overall levels at Key Stage 3 are above the national average, no pupils were awarded the higher levels. Although the course in Years 7 and 8 has been modified to ensure greater opportunity for pupils to reach those levels, the allocation of time is a factor which mitigates against it and should also be addressed.

128 In the sixth form, students continue to develop their knowledge skills and understanding to an appropriately high degree and in observed lessons showed great facility in using and talking about ICT, for example Year 13 students explaining their use of macros in a spreadsheet, or Year 12 students setting up an 'error trap' for their programs.

129 In the last report teaching was identified as a strength and it remains so. The majority of lessons observed were good, sometimes very good and none was less than satisfactory. In the good lessons, there is a clear structure, good relationships based on mutual respect, explicitly high expectations for standards of academic attainment and behaviour, and gentle humour. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to use a variety of teaching aids, from whiteboard to laptop projector, in order to engage pupils effectively in the learning process. Brisk pace and a variety of purposeful activities ensure that pupils are engaged in the work and as a result make good progress. In all cases, lessons are supported by very high quality teaching materials, produced by members of the department. The scheme of work is detailed, well planned and carefully differentiated to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make good progress at an appropriate level. This progress is thoroughly assessed and carefully recorded and monitored for those pupils following ICT courses.

130 As a result, pupils learn well. They listen carefully to the teacher and to each other, and work with purpose, concentration and often enthusiasm. They feel confident and secure in making contributions to lessons, and are ready to offer advice and support to each other when working. The contributions they make are articulate and thoughtful, with good use of technical vocabulary, supported by the department's emphasis on developing literacy skills. As they progress through the school they become confident, independent users of ICT, and it is a subject which they clearly value and enjoy. They make good progress throughout each course, and this results in the high standards of attainment reported above.

131 The requirement for all subjects of the National Curriculum to include aspects of ICT is not met. The ICT co-ordinators offer support and advice to staff, but there is no regular, planned, formal forum at which the co-ordinators can initiate and lead developments, nor any formal, routine means by which they can monitor delivery and ensure compliance with statutory requirements. In addition, no member of the senior management team has responsibility for overseeing the development of ICT. The result is that cross-curricular use is uneven, with good practice in geography, physical education and art but very little in music. In modern foreign languages, use is made of the Internet in the upper school, but difficulties in access to the computer suites was reported as a reason for lack of development in most subjects. The school has worked hard to maintain and improve provision since the last report and now has three suites of computers together with laptops available for sixth form use. However, the overall ratio of nine pupils to each computer is too high to satisfy the present and growing demands for access, both from departments such as business studies and modern foreign languages, and from individual pupils who wish to use the facilities independently. The use of ICT across all subjects was an issue raised in the last inspection and it remains a crucial area for development.

132 This is a strong department achieving good results, which has consolidated its position since the last report. It is now poised to offer profound benefits to the school as a whole by supporting and enhancing learning and enabling more effective school wide assessment procedures. It offers exciting new opportunities such as video conferencing and the ability for pupils, teachers and parents to download material and communicate via a school website. It will not fulfil its potential, however, without improved time allocation at Key Stage 3 clearer co-ordination and support from senior management to ensure implementation across all subjects, and even further improvement in the provision of computers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

133 Teachers' assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2000 shows that pupils' attainment was below the national expectation. The results were slightly below those attained in 1999. In GCSE in 2000, the proportion of pupils attaining A* - C grades was below the national average and broadly in line with the school average. Girls attained better than boys in relation to higher grades. Pupils attained broadly in line with the national average for A* to G grades, and the average point score. Results fell very slightly in the attainment of A* to C grades from the previous year, but this was against a much sharper fall in the school as a whole and against a trend of steady improvement and increased numbers of pupils studying languages over the last three years. The marked difference between standards achieved by boys and girls has been consistent over this period with the differential being higher than that found nationally; it is just beginning to be addressed by the department. In 2000 no pupils reached the highest grade. The reason for this is partially due to a significant disruption to staffing over the last two years.

134 In 2000, two girls took and passed A level French, achieving their highest grade in this subject, and attaining well in relation to their prior achievement. No comparison has been made with national figures as the number involved is too small.

135 The evidence of work and lessons observed showed that by the end of Year 9 pupils attain standards that are slightly below the national expectation. By the end of Year 11 they are broadly in line and the attainment of girls of above average ability is good. In both key stages standards achieved in listening and reading are around the national expectation, and in listening sometimes higher. Pupils can respond with understanding to the use of French for the conduct of the lesson, and understand the teacher's explanations in French. In the best lessons, grammar, for example how to make past tenses, is successfully understood without recourse to explanations in English. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. By the end of Year 11 standards in writing are around the national average, although girls' work is more accurate than that of boys. There is not enough evidence of extended writing. Speaking skills in Years 7 to 11 are below average. Vocabulary and structures are not always secure and pupils are too dependent on the support of written text for oral work, which leads to poor pronunciation and intonation, a lack of confidence and spontaneity in responses and an inability to respond to even simple, unprepared questions. Boys particularly give brief and hesitant responses to questions. However, in one of the best lessons seen, Year 9 girls gave confident presentations and answered unprepared questions on their work experience placements, using accurate language and sophisticated constructions. The department has begun to identify boys who under-achieve and work on improving their standards. Knowledge and understanding about language and ICT skills develop steadily throughout Key Stage 3 and more quickly in Key Stage 4, where it is given more attention by teachers

136 Standards attained in the sixth form are good. Students are able to develop complex ideas about moral, social and other issues, such as whether war is ever justified, pollution and class, in extended conversations or in writing. They can appreciate poetry and understand nuances. The standard of course work is also good.

Spanish

137 All pupils study Spanish for one hour per week in Year 9, and a growing number of pupils of all abilities study the subject, either as a short course for one hour per week, or as a GCSE subject in Years 10 and 11. Thirty-five pupils, 31 of whom were girls, were entered for GCSE in 2000. For most of those pupils, Spanish was the only language studied in Years 10 and 11. The number of pupils attaining an A* - C grade was significantly below the national average as was the average point score, whilst the percentage attaining an A* - G grade was around the national average. Performance in Spanish was significantly below the school average, particularly for girls. There are currently no students studying A level Spanish. In 2000, three of the five A level candidates attained their best grade in Spanish and four out of five attained a pass grade. In lessons seen, standards attained at the end of Years 9 - 11 are well below the national expectation. This is largely due to the limited time devoted to the subject and the tendency for pupils of all abilities who are disaffected with languages and some of whom have high levels of absence to opt for the short course in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 9 and in Year 10 and 11 GCSE Spanish groups attain levels commensurate with their stage of learning, except in speaking skills, where standards are lower. By the end Year 11 the accuracy of written work is variable. All pupils can write short paragraphs, for example to book accommodation or to describe their families and friends to a pen friend. Above average pupils use more descriptive language and a range of tenses. Pupils read well and respond to spoken instructions and information in Spanish, but their own use of the spoken language is more restricted. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make sound progress.

French and Spanish

138 Teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory overall in Years 10 to 11, and good in a third of lessons; this is better than at the time of the last inspection. Learning was unsatisfactory in the short course Spanish lesson and was largely due to pupils' attitudes to the subject. Teaching and learning is good in the sixth form, with one in three lessons being very good, and one satisfactory. Teachers are all good linguists who use the target language extensively in lessons. This has led to an improvement in pupils' listening skills since the last inspection. Basic skills are taught competently and support the development of pupils' knowledge about language, particularly in Years 9 to 11. Aspects of planning support learning as teachers plan a range of activities in speaking, listening, reading and speaking for each lesson, and try to ensure that pupils of all abilities can take part through the provision of support and setting different tasks for pupils of different abilities. The work of language assistants is well planned by teachers and helps in the development of listening skills and improves pupils' pronunciation. Relationships with pupils are good and form the basis of orderly classes in which pupils concentrate on their learning, work hard and behave very well. Pupils collaborate effectively in pairs and groups. Effective use is made of resources, for example homemade flashcards about films and animals which amused and motivated the pupils. Homework is set regularly to consolidate, but not often to extend learning. There is, however, a lack of sharpness and clarity about the learning objectives of lessons and they are not routinely shared with pupils so that they know what to do to improve their work. Also, a greater range of teaching strategies is needed to develop pupils' speaking skills further. Currently, pupils are asked to speak before vocabulary and structures are

secure, hence they are hesitant and are over-reliant on written support. Teachers ask questions which require minimal responses or provide most of the reply themselves leaving pupils to add short phrases. Tasks are sometimes structured so that pupils can successfully complete them without real understanding, for example a Year 7 pupil was able to choose two phrases from two lists and express an opinion about his likes and dislikes, without understanding what he had written or said.

139 There is a greater level of challenge and rigour in sixth form teaching than in the rest of the school. In one very good lesson, a student was guided to discuss items of the day's foreign news fluently and with great accuracy by skilful and persistent questioning, correction and good modelling of language.

140 The way in which the second foreign language is currently organised is inefficient, leads to low GCSE results in Spanish and to very small groups for A level. Teachers work very hard and the department makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through, for example, the wide range of extra curricular activities, foreign visits and work experience offered. The department is well led and managed and departmental priorities, for example targeting the raising of boys' achievement, are sensible. Although in need of more focus, the department is beginning to make better use of data and other means of monitoring to identify problems and bring about improvements.

MUSIC

141 Overall standards are satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment of the majority of pupils matches national averages. The last inspection found a 'marked lack of skills and knowledge' in Year 9 and this is no longer the case, a significant amount of above average results now being achieved as a result of much more effective teaching. Key Stage 3 pupils use technical language with confidence and their listening skills are developing well. Performing skills on electric keyboards show similar good progress and some good improvisation on Indian scales was heard. GCSE results, for the relatively low numbers entered over the last five years, have been variable, meeting national averages for A* - C grades in half the instances, and were best in 2000 where the small group of girls did very well. In the Key Stage 4 lessons observed, the majority of Year 11 pupils are reaching standards above examination expectations in performing, and Year 10 pupils' listening skills are satisfactory. In relation to their abilities, all pupils achieve well except occasionally in Key Stage 3 where the demands of conventional music notation are beyond them. The rationale for using such notation needs clarifying in some cases. Attainment in instrumental lessons is satisfactory and rehearsals for the forthcoming school production, in which pupils from across the whole age range are involved, showed good to high standards in singing.

142 The quality of class teaching is good overall with many very good features at Key Stage 3. Teachers are skilled musicians. Speaking and listening are taught well. Planning is very good and learning outcomes are clear and appropriate. The lack of clarity criticised in the previous report is no longer evident. Activities are carefully sequenced, but sometimes too close an adherence to a commercial scheme reduces challenge to pupils. Otherwise expectations are high and pace in lessons is brisk. Teaching methods are good. Lessons begin with enjoyable warm-ups; there is probing class questioning and practical activities are well organized. Pupils are very well managed and the teaching sustains pupils' motivation and concentration well in the lively classroom ethos created. On the spot feedback to pupils is very good. Little homework is set and its benefits should be extended, particularly in tasks such as keyboard practice. Pupils can make good verbal judgements about music heard but should be given more opportunities to appraise their performing and composing. Pupils'

special educational needs are generally well met and provision for the talented is very good. They are given extra opportunities to develop their skills in lessons and through voluntary sessions. Learning is good, with pupils concentrating well in lessons. Music rehearsals for the school production were expertly directed. Instrumental music teaching is generally satisfactory but the teaching strategies of some staff are too limited. Pupils enjoy their class music lessons. This was not the case at the time of the last inspection. Attitudes are now very positive, behaviour is very good and pupils work well both independently and in small group work.

143 The curriculum meets statutory requirements but vocal activity should be more regularly experienced in lessons. Singing does not feature in the daily assemblies and its staged introduction would benefit both the occasion and the music curriculum. Music from other cultures is well represented in lessons. The limited extra-curricular programme noted in the last report has been significantly extended by the school production but there remains a need for ensembles to play in for those who learn instruments. The subject is very well led. Since the last inspection there have been two changes of head of department and the present incumbent, in post for only a term and a half, has made a significant impact on standards and put the subject on the map in the school. The level of resources, criticised in the last inspection, has become somewhat better since then but the aural environment remains unsatisfactory and there is too little use of ICT. Accommodation and resources are only just adequate for present needs and deserve considerable improvement if music is to develop in the school in the way that it so clearly now can.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144 Overall standards in physical education, by the end of Key Stage 3, are in line with those expected nationally. GCSE results were below national averages in 2000, but standards of performance in lessons are satisfactory and results are likely to be better next year.

145 The majority of pupils have good levels of individual skill and knowledge and an understanding of how skills develop into quality performance through well-focused practice. They understand how the body reacts during exercise and how exercise can contribute to fitness and health. Pupils develop good body management through the key stages and are able to evaluate their own and other pupils' work.

146 Year 7 pupils can explain how the body reacts during different types of exercise and why regular safe exercise is good for fitness and health. Year 8 pupils perform gymnastics with control and fluency and higher attaining pupils with greater consistency. Year 9 boys and girls dance with increasing clarity showing an understanding of rhythm and phrasing and expressing themselves effectively. Year 10 pupils put together sequences of their own in gymnastics and comment constructively on other pupils' performances. Some pupils show little consistency when serving in badminton although others perform well. The majority of Year 11 pupils adapt appropriately and respond to others' performances in volleyball showing awareness of attack and defence strategies.

147 The pass rate at A level is 100 percent. Some Year 13 students, currently studying for GCE A level, have a good understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. This is shown in their application of high level observational analysis skills. A number of students in Year 12 are able to perform under pressure when planning and leading practical activities.

148 Pupils respond well in physical education lessons. They listen carefully to instructions and concentrate well on their performance. When coached on how to improve

they practise what has been suggested and often make good progress. When commenting on their own performance they are perceptive and older pupils are appropriately analytical when they are asked to evaluate other pupils' performance they are helpful in their comments and express their views with care and sensitivity. Behaviour is good in all lessons and excellent in the sixth form.

149 The quality of teaching in all key stages is good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and some teaching is very good. Where teaching is good, learning objectives are clear and reviewed, there is appropriate use of questioning to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding and there is effective use of demonstration. For example, in Years 7, 8 and 9 gymnastic and dance and Year 11 volleyball lessons pupils were challenged by teachers to describe the components of good performance in either the development of specific skills or movement phrases. Teachers provided opportunities for pupils to analyse and evaluate performance through good quality demonstrations, by both pupils and teachers. The result had a positive effect on learning in these lessons.

150 Where teaching is very good pupils of all abilities are engaged in more independent learning tasks. For example in Year 9 dance and Year 11 volleyball lessons, Year 10 gymnastics and GCSE theory lessons, Year 13 A level practical and Year 12 Community Sports Leaders lessons, teaching focused on providing a range of learning opportunities for pupils and students to think for themselves in order to achieve their learning objectives. In these cases, pupils learn through practical exploration, pupil discussions, and the use of visual and text based learning resources, including the use of new technology and are less dependent on the teacher.

151 The department is well managed and has developed since the last inspection. There are clear schemes of work and teachers work well together sharing and developing ideas. There is a shared understanding of the value of the subject within the department and a commitment to achieving good standards for all, including pupils who will play representative sports at the highest level and others who have physical difficulties. Resources in the department are adequate and there is sufficient specialist accommodation, but the sports hall is in need of repair if it is to stay in use. The department runs a good programme of extra curricular activities and achieves good levels of success with its sports teams.

OTHER COURSES

Government and Politics:

152 In the sixth form, government and politics is offered to students at A- and AS levels. It has become a well-established subject in the sixth form, although it is taught to a small group of students. Attainment at A level has been good with all students entered for the examination being successful. This trend has been maintained over the last six years.

153 The progress of students in politics is good because of their active contribution in lessons, their willingness to ask questions and, importantly, debate issues and views with teachers. All students have a responsible attitude to learning. They can discuss political ideas, analyse and interpret political texts and confidently express their opinions.

154 The standard of teaching is good with all lessons having a clear purpose and including a good balance of teacher-led discussion and student response. Oral questioning is commonly used successfully to probe and reinforce knowledge. Learning resources, which are modest, are used efficiently.

Psychology

155 In the sixth form psychology is a new subject, which has been offered to students since 1997 at A level and more recently at AS level. Attainment at A level has been good with all students being successful.

156 All students show a keen interest in the subject and their progress is good because they are prepared to ask questions and express their views and reveal their understanding of psychological concepts. Their written work reflects a broad understanding of psychological theory and research methods.

157 The standard of teaching is good because both teachers who are experienced but not specialists, demonstrate a good grasp of subject knowledge and convey to their students an enthusiasm and interest in what they are teaching. The style of teaching is enquiry based, which is compatible with the character of the subject. There is effective use of questioning and stress on understanding key terms. Learning resources are sufficient at this stage of the subject's development.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

158 This is a new one-year intermediate level course offered to students in the sixth form. The standard of students' work corresponds to course targets. Students are enthusiastic and are gaining more self-confidence in their capabilities. They are showing increasing maturity and have responded positively to the trust given to them by their teachers.

159 In lessons students are co-operative and give good support to each other. The standard of teaching is good and is so because lessons are clearly focused, challenging and encourage students to present their ideas. Lesson content is vocationally relevant and though the teaching approach is appropriately assertive, it is also directed towards building the confidence of students to become independent learners. The management of the course is effective and experienced in assessment requirements of the new criteria and specifications in GNVQ. There is also regular and vigilant monitoring of students' progress, which helps to keep them moving forward and contributes to their good progress. There is no dedicated resource for GNVQ but the accommodation used at this early stage of development is adequate and resources are satisfactory.

Business Studies GCSE and GNVQ

160 At Key Stage 4 in business studies, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* - C in GCSE examinations in 2000 was above the national average. This continues a trend of above average attainment compared with national standards. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. Attainment in lessons is closer to national standards at the moment and the good examination results are linked to very careful preparation.

161 In the sixth form attainment in GNVQ Advanced and Intermediate levels business studies is above the national average, but the number of students who are entered for each examination is small.

162 At Key Stage 4 in business studies, pupils are making good progress because of the enthusiasm and motivation they have for the subject. The majority of students are confident in their understanding of business concepts; boys in particular, can apply their knowledge of the local environment to a business context.

163 In the sixth form students are also making good progress owing to their willingness to participate in lessons, through asking questions, sharing and discussing their business knowledge.

164 At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, students are well behaved and have a responsible attitude to learning. All students are dedicated to doing well and offer support to each other.

165 The standard of teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is good. It is characterised by good planning, the use of a variety of teaching methods and close, positive relationships with students. Questioning of students' understanding is frequently used, as well as discussion and oral analysis of business processes and structures. Time and resources are used well. Homework is linked to course requirements and assessment procedures support students' learning.

166 Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are generally adequate but there are not sufficient computers to teach the ICT elements of the course.