

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY & ST CHAD CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104401

Headteacher: Ms M C Keelan

Reporting inspector: Mr Rod Spinks
2783

Dates of inspection: 19 – 23 March 2001

Inspection number: 188214

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:	Old Fallings Lane Low Hill Wolverhampton
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor M Benton
Date of previous inspection:	April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2783	Rod Spinks	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and pupils' achievements.
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
9009	Valerie Bradley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
				How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3552	David Darwood	Team inspector		How well are pupils taught?
				How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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19913	Roger Garrett	Team inspector	English	
			English as an additional language	
17799	Tony Stoddart	Team inspector	Science	
17569	David Thomson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
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22348	John Hopkin	Team inspector	Geography	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Comprehensive School is an average sized secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. There are 829 pupils on roll with 86 students in the Sixth Form. 35.5% of pupils are listed on the school's special educational needs register which is well above the national average. The number of pupils for whom a statement of need is held is also above the average (3.9%). The majority of pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, although a number of pupils have identified hearing problems. 31.5% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is above average as is the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language at 6.9%.

The school is situated to the north of the city of Wolverhampton and serves an area of mixed housing. Pupils come from the full range of backgrounds, however, significantly more than average are disadvantaged. About a fifth of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic origins including Caribbean, African, Indian and Travellers. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school covers the full range. Over half of the pupils enter the school with well below average attainment especially in the national assessments for 11 year olds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Our Lady and St Chad Comprehensive school is a good and improving school where good teaching enables most pupils to learn effectively and make progress. Pupils attain standards which, although below the national average, show they have made good progress as they move through the different stages of secondary education. The school is very well led by the headteacher and the governors, who have ensured that the school continues to improve. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching particularly for Sixth Form students.
- The attainment of the most able pupils.
- The leadership and direction of the school by the headteacher and governors.
- The support, care and guidance for pupils.
- The support, encouragement and development of gifted pupils especially in art and design, music and physical education.

What could be improved

- The standards attained in information and communication technology.
- The focus of the learning targets for pupils with special educational needs.
- The opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own education.
- The monitoring of homework, marking and the personal, social and health programme.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996 and since that time has made satisfactory improvement although the rate of improvement has increased significantly over the last two years. Effective monitoring by senior and middle managers has helped to improve the quality of teaching. This has improved the progress pupils make and the standards they attain in all subjects except information and communication technology. Senior managers and heads of department are now using a wide range of assessment data to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and so inform the work that they do to ensure that the school continues to improve.

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				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	D	E	E	C	Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D
A-levels/AS-levels	E	E	E		Well below average E

Pupils attain standards by the age of 14 which are well below the national average and below the average for schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. By the age of 16 pupils attain standards which are below the national average and in line with those of similar schools. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment and are making above average progress as they move through Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. In the GCSE examinations pupils attain more higher grades (A*-C) in modern foreign languages, art and design and physical education than in dual award science, mathematics and information and communication technology. There has been a trend of improving standards but the rate of improvement is below that found nationally. The school has set some challenging targets for pupils' attainment and evaluates its performance against these targets.

The standards of the pupils' work that inspectors observed in Key Stage 3 were above those expected in art and design. In design and technology, history, music and physical education standards are typical of those expected. Standards in literacy, numeracy, English, mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages were below the national average. Standards in information and communication technology were well below average.

In Key Stage 4 inspectors observed work that was well above the national average in art and design and modern foreign languages. Standards seen in information and communication technology were well below the average whilst standards in English, mathematics, science, literacy and numeracy were below average. The standards seen in the other subjects of the curriculum were judged to be

typical of those expected. There were several examples seen of very high standards being attained in music and art and design by individual pupils.

After discussing their work with them and from work seen in lessons inspectors judged that Sixth Form students are attaining standards which are in the expected range for both A-level and GNVQ courses.

Pupils are achieving well. High attaining pupils make good progress as do pupils from a wide range of backgrounds; pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils enter the school with generally well below average attainment and make good progress even though standards by the age of 14 and 16 remain below average when compared with national data and that of similar schools. In several subjects notably art and design, modern foreign languages and music many pupils are making very good progress and attaining at least average standards by the age of 16.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Generally positive and compliant.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons and satisfactory when moving round the school. Pupils are polite, friendly and co-operative.
Personal development and relationships	Generally good. Pupils develop good relationships with teachers and fellow pupils. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix harmoniously. They develop good inter-personal skills but there are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance levels are well below the national average but the school is working hard to improve pupils' attendance.

Most pupils and students are keen to come to school and expect to work hard. Teachers manage pupils well so that they behave well in lessons although the narrow corridors in the building cause some difficulties as they move to and from lessons. Pupils form good relationships with their teachers and other pupils, which makes for a positive atmosphere in the school generally and especially in lessons.

The school monitors pupils' attendance and has developed a range of strategies to promote good attendance. However, attendance levels remain unsatisfactory and well below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In all inspectors saw 182 whole or part lessons during the inspection involving all teachers in all

subjects other than in religious education, which was the subject of a separate inspection carried out at the same time. Inspectors judged that teaching was at least satisfactory in 96% of the lessons seen. Overall, 40% of lessons were judged to be good and in a further 27% of lessons teaching was judged to be very good or outstanding. The best teaching was found in the Sixth Form and the largest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 9.

The teaching of English and mathematics was always at least satisfactory and it was mostly satisfactory in science in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the other subjects of the curriculum teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory with the best teaching found in art and design and music. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan effective lessons. They use a range of teaching methods to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Where teaching is less than satisfactory (in only 4% of lessons) teachers do not plan work which meets the needs of all pupils and lessons are delivered at a slow pace which reduces pupils' interest and the progress they make. Overall the effectiveness of the teaching of literacy and numeracy in all subjects of the curriculum is variable. Inspectors saw some good examples in art and design of pupils' writing but literacy and numeracy skills were insufficiently addressed, for example, in geography and science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Broad and generally balanced. The current information and communication technology programme does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Focused support for basic skills is good but pupils' individual learning plans lack the clear subject focus necessary to ensure that they make better progress in mainstream lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils have full access to the planned curriculum and make similar progress to their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Generally good. Spiritual development is good with many opportunities in the curriculum as well as in assemblies. Moral development is good. Social development is good. Cultural development is good but there are too many missed opportunities to use the diversity of the pupil population to contribute to this aspect of pupils' development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Appropriate systems are in place for child protection, health and safety and the care of ill or injured pupils.

Although the curriculum is generally broad and balanced covering all subjects, the programme for information and communication technology does not fully cover the National Curriculum requirements. There is limited time available for information and communication technology in Key

Stage 3 and there is insufficient monitoring to ensure the delivery of the programme through the other subjects of the curriculum in Key Stage 4. Only pupils who study this subject as one of their subject choices at Key Stage 4 have access to the full programme expected.

Pupils with English as an additional language and those from Traveller backgrounds make good progress, which is similar to that of their fellow pupils.

Overall pupils' personal development is good and they develop a good understanding of right and wrong as well as an understanding of their own and other cultures. However, some opportunities are missed to celebrate the cultural diversity present in the school. There are some good displays of pupils' work which celebrate a variety of cultures but these are confined to subject classroom areas and are therefore only available to pupils studying those subjects. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop and practise their independent learning skills and this limits the contribution they make to their own learning. The provision for personal, social and health education is not well co-ordinated and the taught programme is not supporting the work of other departments.

Pupils are well cared for whilst they are in school. There are effective systems in place to ensure their security and safety.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides good clear direction for the development of the school. The newly established senior management team is enhancing the work of the school. Middle managers in some subjects are not having sufficient impact on raising the quality of education and the standards pupils attain.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very effective. Governors show good, clear knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are fully involved in its strategic management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior managers make very good use of a wide range of data to monitor the effectiveness of the school. Middle managers are beginning to make use of the available data to evaluate the effectiveness of subject departments.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes effective use of the resources available to it. There are sufficient teachers to deliver the curriculum and adequate resources in most subjects. Across the school the range of resources is more limited for special educational needs as are reference materials for independent learning.

The management of the school is good. The headteacher and the senior managers have a clear view of what needs to be done to continue the recent improvements in the school. They make good use of a wide range of data as well as first hand monitoring of the work of the school to identify strengths

and weaknesses. This information is shared with the governors who are then able to contribute very effectively to the management of the school. Overall subject departments are effectively managed, among the most effective being modern foreign languages. There is some inconsistency in the way departments deliver school policies such as the marking of pupils' work to identify pupils' success and what they need to do to improve. The management of special educational needs is effective but most subject departments are not using sufficiently focused targets for these pupils to ensure that they make the maximum progress.

The school has effectively overcome teacher recruitment difficulties and has a full complement of sufficiently qualified and experienced teachers. The school receives about average funding and governors seek to apply the principles of best value to all aspects of the work of the school. The Sixth Form consortium arrangements are cost effective.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected to work hard. • Children make progress. • The school values individual pupils. • The school promotes the positive attitudes parents wish their children to develop. • The school is approachable. • The school has improved since the last inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consistent use of homework to support pupils' learning. • There could be more extra-curricular activities. • Parents could receive more information about their child's progress. • The behaviour of some pupils. • The school working more closely with parents.

Inspectors found significant evidence to support parents' views that this school expects pupils to work hard and to make good progress. The school does value individual pupils and helps them to develop positive attitudes and relationships. The school continues to improve the quality of its work. Inspectors could not support all the critical views expressed by some parents as pupils' behaviour is generally good and there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available to pupils ranging from sports teams to music groups. Most teachers use homework effectively to support pupils' work in class, although the monitoring of the amounts and regularity could be improved. Generally parents are provided with a good range of information regarding the progress children make. The school is very approachable and parents can obtain additional information should they so wish.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Overall, standards by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are below average but in the Sixth Form standards are at least typical of those expected for A-level and GNVQ courses and frequently above.
- 2 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards which are below the national average. In the 2000 national assessments for 14 year olds pupils attained standards in English and science that were below the national expectation, and standards in mathematics were well below the average. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard of Level 5 or above was below the average in English and science, and well below the average in mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 or above was well below the average in English and mathematics and below average for science. In comparison with schools having similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals standards in English and science were close to the average for level 5 with mathematics below average. For Level 6 and above, whilst mathematics and science were close to the average English was below average. There has been a general trend of varying standards over the last three years, which reflects the significant variations of pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 2. There is, however, a marked difference between the test scores and teachers' assessments in English. Teachers have overestimated the standards pupils might achieve.
- 3 Standards of literacy are below those found nationally for this age range, and pupils' writing skills are the least developed. In numeracy standards are below average and there are too few opportunities for pupils to utilise these skills across the curriculum.
- 4 By the end of Key Stage 3, from a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work and the work they do in lessons, inspectors judge that standards are currently above those expected in art and design, close to those expected in design and technology, history, music and physical education and below those expected in English, mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages. Standards in information and communication technology are well below the expected level.
- 5 By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are well below those expected in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more A*-C grades was well below the national average. The percentage attaining one or more and five or more A*-G grades were both well below the national average. When the achievement is measured in terms of average points scores (where A grade = 8 and G grade = 1) standards are below the national average. Boys achieve better standards than girls do within this pattern and standards have been rising slowly over the last three years at a rate below the national trend. The highest standards are attained in French, physical education and art and design where a limited pupil population does very well to attain above the national average for higher grade passes, but in

all other subjects standards are below the national averages with significant numbers of pupils attaining E, F, G and U grades.

- 6 Analysis of individual pupils' attainment in the GCSE shows that their attainment is highest in English, business studies, art and design, design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. They are lowest in double science, mathematics, information and communication technology and religious studies. Girls attain better than boys in art and design and worse than boys in mathematics.
- 7 From a scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of lessons and talking to pupils in Key Stage 4, inspectors judge that current standards are improving. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology remain below average but standards are closer to those expected in all other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs work well to attain the targets set for them although these are not always sufficiently subject focused. Pupils, for whom English is an additional language and those from Traveller backgrounds have full access to the curriculum and attain standards which reflect their ability.
- 8 Standards, attained by Sixth Form students, are generally within the expected range for the courses they are following. Numbers have been small for those following A-level courses so comparison with the national data is of limited value, however, individual students make good progress when their prior attainment is taken into account.
- 9 The standards of work achieved by boys across the school is below that of girls, although this is in line with national patterns. However, in mathematics girls underachieve in relation to boys when compared with national averages. Black heritage pupils attain and make progress at or slightly below the average for the school; this is better than the national trend. Asian heritage pupils attain and make progress above the average for the school, in line with national trends.
- 10 In English pupils are attaining below average standards at both Key Stages 3 and 4. They do develop their writing skills but there are too few opportunities for them to use these skills in the other subjects of the curriculum. They have limited opportunities to use their reading and note taking skills through independent research work.
- 11 In mathematics pupils are attaining standards that are below those typical of their age in both key stages. Number skills are poorly developed when pupils enter the school and although they make mostly good progress they have too few opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in subjects such as science.
- 12 Standards in science are below average. Pupils do make good progress but their lack of a secure foundation from their previous schooling limits the standards they attain. The standards in all aspects of science are similar and they have sufficient opportunity to develop their practical investigation skills.
- 13 Standards in information and communication technology are unsatisfactorily low. Limited

curriculum time results in unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 in essential skills and understanding. Only those pupils following the GCSE information and communication technology courses reach a satisfactory standard in Key Stage 4, other pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop and use their skills in the other subjects of the curriculum. Sixth Form students make use of information and communication technology particularly when presenting coursework, however, the very limited access to the Internet is severely limiting these students' access to a wide range of information to support their learning.

- 14 Over half the pupils entered the school in Year 7 with a low level of literacy skills and especially low attainment in reading. Standards of literacy on entry whilst remaining below average show significant recent improvement with the current Year 7 pupils. Pupils' writing skills are under-developed especially in Key Stage 3 and insufficient attention is being paid to developing these skills across most subjects of the curriculum with art and design being a significant exception.
- 15 Pupils enter the school with under-developed numeracy skills and make some progress as they move through the school. At the present time these pupils do not attain average skill levels by the end of Year 11.
- 16 Pupils on average enter Our Lady and St Chad School with well below average attainment at the end of their primary schooling. They work hard and make generally good progress in their learning even though attainment by the age of 16 remains below average. The GCSE data indicates that progress from age 14 to 16 is above average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress where they receive targeted support, particularly in developing literacy skills, however, progress in other subjects is more limited. Pupils for whom English is an additional language, and those from travelling backgrounds make good progress to attain standards that reflect their ability.
- 17 Overall standards in English, mathematics and science have remained steady since the last inspection. Standards have improved in geography and physical education but standards in information and communication technology remain unsatisfactory. When pupils' earlier attainment is taken into account they make good progress as they move through Key Stages 3 and 4 in all subjects except information and communication technology. As a consequence pupils are achieving well in response to the improved quality of teaching they receive and their positive attitudes to school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 18 The attitude of most pupils to learning is good. Most pupils like coming to school, show interest in their work and persevere with the tasks set. Good attitudes to learning are a reflection of the good relationships within lessons and throughout the school.
- 19 Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. In lessons where activities are not interesting or sufficiently challenging a few pupils become uninterested and make insufficient progress. Inappropriate behaviour is well managed by most teachers, but when it is not, it has an adverse effect on the learning of other pupils. The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of

pupils throughout the school show that they think about their actions and the impact these have on others. In class discussions, most pupils listen well, share resources and give good levels of support to each other. They listen patiently to their teachers, sometimes for long periods of time. In some lessons opportunities for pupils to work independently and research more deeply into the subject being discussed are missed. In some subject areas, particularly in art and design, music and physical education, when pupils are given good opportunities to experiment and explore their own contributions and those of others, pupils respond very positively. In one Year 7 English lesson considering *Winter the Huntsman* by Osbert Sitwell, pupils were very effectively encouraged to use their imaginations to extend the range of vocabulary available to them.

- 20 In physical education, pupils are highly motivated, are enthusiastic and develop good skills in working as a team. In art and design and music, pupils are very well motivated, and well behaved, responding well to opportunities to work both independently and in groups.
- 21 Pupils show interest in their work and most concentrate well over long periods of time. When concentration is seen to decrease, it is often towards the end of a double period when the tasks set do not satisfactorily fill the time available. In lessons seen where the pace was brisk and the change of task frequent and well structured, pupils responded with enthusiasm, enjoyed the lessons, and made good progress. For example in one Year 11 lesson in information and communication technology, pupils enjoyed learning to merge spreadsheets and templates, making very good progress.
- 22 At lunchtime, despite the cramped space available for eating in the dining hall, levels of supervision ensure that behaviour is good. There is some inappropriate behaviour while pupils are moving around the school.
- 23 Most pupils are polite and friendly to visitors. They show good levels of care of the school premises; there is no graffiti and little litter. When the school is shown to trust pupils to behave well, for example, when pupils enter the school premises early in the morning, they respond positively to that trust. They appreciate the breakfast club provision, and work sensibly in the library. Most parents believe that the behaviour of pupils in the school is good, and that when inappropriate behaviour does occur, the school does its best to find out why there is bad behaviour, and to address it.
- 24 During the last school year there were 53 fixed period exclusions. In the first half of this academic year, there have been 29 fixed period exclusions. Most exclusions have occurred as a result of incidents of physical violence between pupils, or bad language used to staff members. When exclusions occur, parents are involved at an appropriate stage, and are invited to be involved in agreeing behaviour contracts on the pupils' return to school. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two academic years.
- 25 Pupils on the school's register of special education needs are fully integrated within the mainstream school. Overall the attitudes of pupils with special education needs are good. They attend school regularly, and they are well motivated. They benefit from the work of the learning support assistants within the classroom in a wide range of subject areas,

including some particularly strong support in music lessons. Their behaviour and motivation, when they are withdrawn to work in small groups or individually, is good. The work of the teacher for Traveller children enables them to receive appropriate support, and assists their progress. Pupils are positive about the support they receive, and make good relationships with the learning support staff.

- 26 Overall, all pupils irrespective of gender or background show positive attitudes to the school and their work. They work together well and there is a harmonious atmosphere in the school.
- 27 Pupils respond well to opportunities to take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Response is particularly good when pupils perform in an impressive range of musical performances and sporting activities.
- 28 Pupils are able to contribute to the life of the school through the year and school councils. Sixth Form students perform a range of duties as prefects. The head boy and girl and their deputies successfully represent the school within the community.
- 29 When opportunities to take responsibility are made available, pupils respond enthusiastically. The range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, and to undertake independent research, is limited. When students enter the Sixth Form, they respond very positively to the trust and respect they encounter, and move independently and responsibly between the various sites where Sixth Form lessons are taught.
- 30 There is no racial tension evident in the school; pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix harmoniously and through their own choice. The school and pupils acknowledge that some bullying does occur. However, pupils confirm that, despite the occasional inappropriate behaviour of a few pupils in corridors and recreation areas, they do feel safe and secure at school.
- 31 Attendance remains well below the national average, and the incidence of unauthorised absence is above that nationally. The attendance record of most pupils is good, but there are a number of identified pupils and families whose attendance record is unsatisfactory or poor. The attendance record of most Traveller children is unsatisfactory. In addition a number of pupils regularly arrive late. The school works hard to encourage pupils to attend, and to arrive punctually. However, some parents still do not appreciate the importance of their children's regular attendance at school, nor the need to ensure that they arrive punctually. There is regular and supportive monitoring of pupils' attendance, and the school now attempts to make early telephone contact with parents. The school effectively targets those pupils whose levels of attendance falls below 80%. Regular meetings between heads of year and the education welfare officer, who works very effectively with the school, ensure that there is ongoing and pro-active attention to address the low level of attendance. The school monitors the attendance of individual tutor groups, and most pupils respond well to the incentives to raise levels of attendance across the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 32 On admission in Year 7 pupils enter mixed ability tutor groups. They are also taught most of their lessons in these groups. There is some setting in mathematics. In Years 8 and 9 pupils are placed in bands in English, mathematics and science. In Year 9 pupils are placed in sets for modern foreign languages. In Years 7, 8 and 9 some pupils are withdrawn from some classes for extra lessons to enhance their basic skills as well as receiving additional support in classes.
- 33 The overall quality of teaching is good and is a strength of the school. In 96% of lessons observed teaching was satisfactory or better. The teaching in 67% was good or better and in 27% very good or excellent. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Good teaching was seen in all subjects and year groups and is a significant factor in accounting for the positive attitudes of pupils towards their learning and towards the progress pupils make throughout the school.
- 34 During the inspection 182 lessons were observed, 97 in Key Stage 3, 63 in Key Stage 4 and 22 in the Sixth Form. Teaching was good in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the Sixth Form teaching was very good.
- 35 In English, teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in the Sixth Form and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection and as a result pupils make good progress, particularly when teaching is lively, challenging and gives pupils the opportunity to actively be involved in the lessons. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on poetry pupils were encouraged to work in small groups to discuss and analyse the content, mood and tone of a poem on relationships and then to present their findings to the rest of the group. In less satisfactory lessons teachers talked for long periods which required pupils to listen without the opportunity to review or comment on the work.
- 36 In mathematics teaching is good in the Sixth Form and in Key Stage 4. It is also good in Key Stage 3 but the teaching in Years 7 and 8 is not as strong as in Year 9. There are particular strengths in the teaching of the most able in Years 9, 10 and 11. This is in part due to teachers' high expectation of pupils, who respond accordingly. Teachers plan well and there is good use of questioning to reinforce prior learning and to review current work. At times there is a lack of practical work which would engage pupils more actively in lessons and promote deeper levels of understanding.
- 37 In science, teaching overall is good and represents an improvement since the previous inspection. However, there is quite a wide variation in practice. In Key Stage 3 20% of lessons seen were judged to be unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form there were no unsatisfactory lessons. Indeed in the Sixth Form all lessons were judged to be good. In the best lessons planning was thorough and there were a wide variety of activities both to sustain pupils' concentration and enable them to learn in different ways. In unsatisfactory lessons pupils were not given work appropriate to their needs and therefore pupils were uncertain of what was expected of them.
- 38 The school has a policy for developing the skills of literacy and there has been staff training

on how to develop the literacy strategy across the school. The English department have good links with primary schools and have discussed with primary colleagues the development of literacy from Year 6 into Year 7 and beyond. Most departments now have key words displayed in classrooms, although in many lessons seen these were not highlighted by staff. Writing frames are used in geography and history. There is good practice in some areas, particularly in modern foreign languages at Key Stage 4, in art and design in the development of investigation and research activities, and in music in the development of listening skills and use of key words in design and technology. Overall, however, there is not a consistent implementation of the literacy strategy across the school.

- 39 In mathematics there is clear evidence of a structured strategy to improve pupils' numeracy skills. However, presently the impact of this is limited particularly for some of the less able pupils who do not have a sufficient range of basic skills upon which to build. There is some good progress in departments developing numeracy skills in other subjects, for example, in food technology where there is emphasis placed on the accurate measuring of ingredients. In geography a Year 10 class applied number skills well to plan the development of a shanty town. Here numeracy skills were able to contribute to a lively group discussion which promoted deeper understanding of the issues facing other communities. However, across the curriculum opportunities for numeracy to be developed outside of mathematics are presently limited or not exploited.
- 40 Teaching of information and communication technology as a timetabled subject is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but often fails to motivate pupils. There is some better practice at Key Stage 4 but this is down to individual teachers and there is little active promotion or dissemination of good teaching practice in information and communication technology. Elsewhere in the curriculum the teaching of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. There is good practice in individual areas by individual staff. For example, in a Year 13 GNVQ lesson on health and social care, students were demonstrating good use of information and communication technology skills to produce well presented and error free reports. In a Year 10 business studies lesson those pupils with more advanced information and communication technology skills were encouraged to access and use data, seeking support from their peers if necessary whilst the teacher supported those pupils with more limited skills. Overall, however, there is a lack of a coherent whole school approach to using information and communication technology effectively in the delivery of other subjects and using it as a tool for independent study, (although the latter is now a priority in the school's improvement plan). Certainly all pupils would benefit from having more opportunities to apply their information and communication technology skills within the context of the subjects they study.
- 41 Elsewhere in the curriculum teaching is good in music, art and design, modern foreign languages, history and physical education.
- 42 It is satisfactory in all other subjects including business studies and GNVQ, although there is variation between and within departments. In the Sixth Form all lessons observed were at least satisfactory and teaching at Key Stage 4 is slightly better than at Key Stage 3 in most subject areas. The least effective teaching was seen in Year 9 where 90% of lessons seen

were satisfactory or better compared to a school average of 96%.

- 43 The good teaching seen has its basis in effective planning and in the teachers' confident subject knowledge and understanding and how to present it in the classroom. For the majority of teachers there is a real commitment to the school and its pupils. The best lessons are well structured, start with a clear statement of objectives which are revisited at different points and re-emphasised in the final review of the session. The plenary is also used to share and praise pupils' work which contributes to the positive ethos within most lessons. For example, in a Year 13 business studies lesson the teacher positively recognised the students' success and then identified other issues to challenge students further. In a Year 8 music lesson pupils were brought together mid-way through a lesson to share their recital work and given a choice of what to create, both in terms of the chords used and the lyrics put to them. This allowed pupils to celebrate what they had achieved at that point, enabled them to glean ideas from their peers and be refocused back on task. In the good lessons teachers were observed trying not only to ensure high standards but also foster a sense of enjoyment in learning. This was particularly true in music and art and design.
- 44 A consistent feature of good teaching is effective management of pupils' behaviour. In the majority of lessons observed there was an orderly and purposeful atmosphere characterised by good use of humour and praise and a concern for the individual needs of pupils. On the rare occasions when a pupil displayed poor behaviour the teacher acted quickly to defuse the situation and prevent the disruptive behaviour of one pupil affecting the learning of others.
- 45 Teachers make good use of questions both to ascertain prior learning and to check understanding. In the best lessons staff also frequently tried to build upon pupils' prior knowledge and experience to introduce new concepts. For example, before Year 7 pupils were actively involved in experimenting with chemical changes, the teacher talked about what happens when chocolate is heated and left to cook. This demonstrated to the pupils physical change prior to investigating chemical change. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson the teacher used questions to check pupils' understanding in a new topic on angles of elevation and depression and adapted the style and pace of exploration in response to this. In a Year 8 history lesson on the Civil War the teacher carefully linked lesson objectives to previous work and used role-play to help pupils understand different viewpoints and prejudices.
- 46 There is a good sense of pace within lessons which is enhanced by the atmosphere of low stress and high challenge which many staff create in their rooms. The more able pupils are particularly well supported in music, physical education, art and design and mathematics in Years 9, 10 and 11. In physical education many pupils are encouraged to become involved in the Junior Sports Leader Award and help coach and support their peers. Staff also make good use of 'time targets' particularly in business studies, English, science, music and art and design to ensure a sense of urgency to lessons. In physical education, art and design and music a range of different strategies are used to cater for the needs of different abilities. These include a range of resource materials, differentiated tasks and targeted support to individuals by the class teacher.

- 47 Support for pupils with special educational needs is variable. Some pupils do not have individual educational plans or they have inappropriate or very bland targets for improvement. The lack of individual educational plans makes it difficult for the subject teacher to plan appropriately focused support in lessons. In the best lessons learning support assistants work closely with the subject teacher to plan, deliver and review work. This was seen in mathematics, English and science. In lessons where this close collaboration was absent the in-class support was ineffective with learning support assistants having to react to particular situations as they arose in the lesson. This is a waste of the expertise and does little to promote progress for pupils with special educational needs.
- 48 Pupils with English as an additional language are integrated well with other pupils and made good progress. Some pupils, including some Traveller children were appropriately withdrawn from lessons to receive more intensive guidance in basic skills and this clearly is having a positive impact on their progress. In the majority of classes relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are good. This helps improve the motivation and aspiration of the pupils.
- 49 On those relatively few occasions when the teaching seen was less satisfactory or ineffective it was often due to over-directed teaching with long expositions by the teacher and little time for pupils to share, discuss or reflect upon their learning. On some occasions it was due to a lack of challenge. This makes concentration difficult and occasionally led to low levels of disruptive behaviour.
- 50 A significant number of parents expressed concern over the amount of homework that was set. There is a homework policy and overall the setting of homework is satisfactory although variable practice exists. It is not always set regularly. Homework in some subjects plays a significant part in developing pupils' research and investigative skills. For example, in art and design, homework supports class activities, is focused and sometimes imaginative. For example, in a Year 8 group pupils had to illustrate and annotate a letter from Van Gogh to his brother Theo. This involved large elements of literacy as well as art and design. In some areas, however, homework was less stimulating and did little to promote investigative and research skills or build upon class work.
- 51 Most pupils' work is marked regularly although too little attention is paid to improving the presentation of some pupils' work. There were a few good examples seen of teachers' subject comments which explained clearly what a pupil needed to do to improve their work as well as processing what had been done. This is particularly true in English, history and art and design but was not seen in all subjects. Staff made satisfactory use of assessment data to plan lessons but this is more variable in Key Stage 3. In some areas there was no linking of work to National Curriculum levels whilst in other areas, for example, design and technology, science, mathematics and art and design, staff made good use of National Curriculum levels to inform their assessment of pupils' work. In Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form practice was good. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson pupils discussed with their teacher both 'target grades' and estimated grades as a spur to identifying strategies to improve performance. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson pupils were discussing the assessment criteria for a forthcoming examination and the teacher

was identifying what they needed to focus upon to improve their grades.

- 52 There is a clear correlation between the quality of teaching and the quality of learning. Most pupils make good progress in their learning both in lessons and over longer periods of time. This is true for girls and boys, pupils with English as an additional language, and Traveller children. Those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but this is more variable depending on the nature and use of support staff and the extent to which teachers prepare resources and activities appropriate to their specific needs. The latter is made more difficult by the general nature of many targets set for improvement. The good links between the school and its feeder primaries does much to ensure that work is built upon prior experience, particularly in English and mathematics. This is less well done in information and communication technology where the pace of work is often dictated by the teacher regardless of pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers' planning to ensure pupils learn progressively in Key Stage 3 is generally satisfactory. It is better at Key Stage 4 where the curriculum and schemes of work are more closely linked to clear learning outcomes. The great majority of pupils work hard and show good levels of interest and concentration in their work. Creative skills are well developed in art and design and music and physical skills in physical education. Opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their learning are, however, often missed in some subjects. Pupils generally have a mature and increasingly confident approach to their learning but are often very dependent on the teacher. In areas where pupils are allowed to show initiative and take responsibility they respond well. For example, in a Year 8 art and design lesson pupils arrived before the teacher, organised themselves with work and materials and were quickly engaged in their work. In this area pupils are taught self-management and organisational skills and this leads not only to the development of more autonomous pupils but more effective learning. Similarly in a Year 10 design and technology lesson pupils were expected to design and create a timer circuit, troubleshoot malfunctions and showed the ability to explain and discuss the problem they were trying to resolve. Similar examples were seen in physical education and modern foreign languages. However, far too often opportunities for independent learning and developing self study skills are not provided and this restricts pupils' further development as learners.
- 53 In most lessons, pupils from ethnic minorities were observed to respond well to teaching; in some lessons they respond particularly well and make good progress. Many value the opportunities offered by the before and after school clubs. Pupils from all backgrounds show each other respect, co-operate and form good relationships in lessons and around the school.
- 54 Pupils are generally keen to succeed and respond positively to praise and encouragement. These factors make an important contribution to standards of attainment. Pupils welcome opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers recognise the importance of providing guidance and support to help pupils recognise their strengths as well as weaknesses and are beginning to give clearer targets for development. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED

TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

- 55 As at the time of the previous inspection in 1996, the school is providing all of its pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. This involved all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. A personal, social and health education programme is delivered as a rolling programme of one lesson per fortnight. This is designed to address careers, drugs and health education and complements work covered in religious education. Sex education is delivered through science and religious education. Although there is co-ordination between the departments to try and ensure a coherent provision for personal, social and health education across the school the programme is in practice fragmented and it is difficult to monitor pupils' progress and evaluate its effectiveness.
- 56 In Years 10 and 11 the national requirement to offer English, mathematics, science, a modern foreign language, religious education and physical education is largely met. In addition all pupils also follow a course in design and technology. In information and communication technology, however, the school does not fully meet legal requirements at Key Stages 3 and 4. In modern foreign languages the school has sought approval to deliver alternative courses other than modern foreign languages for 22 pupils. These pupils follow an information and communication technology course which is appropriate to their needs and enhances their information and communication technology skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also have the choice of a number of options at GCSE as well as GNVQ in information and communication technology and other accredited courses such as the Certificate of Achievement and the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement.
- 57 The school ensures that there are equal opportunities for all its pupils and there is good access to all aspects of the curriculum. The broad range of experiences offered meets the needs and interests of pupils including those with special educational needs, Traveller children and pupils for whom English is an additional language. The targets identified on the individual education plans of pupils with statements of special educational need are not always specific enough to enable teachers to have the maximum impact on learning. This makes it difficult for staff to monitor their progress and guarantee that teaching is directed to their specific needs.
- 58 The cultural diversity present in the school is recognised and promoted by a number of departments who respond effectively to the school's aims and mission statement. For example, the curriculum in art and design, music and English is enhanced by visitors and special events which celebrate cultural diversity. The cultural diversity of the school and of the nation is reflected and celebrated in display within some teaching rooms and in some parts of the school building; this, however, is underdeveloped in other areas of the curriculum. The library does little to promote cultural diversity or equality of opportunity through its stock or display.
- 59 Appropriate time is allocated to most subjects although art and design, music and information and communication technology do receive less time than other foundation subjects in Key Stage 3. This puts pressure on pupils and staff to deliver all aspects of these subjects. As a result standards in information and communication technology are

unsatisfactory. In art and design and music staff planning and the pace of delivery are very good but further progress for pupils is hampered by the lack of curriculum time. In science the present timetable of double periods lasting 100 minutes also acts as a restraint on standards with sessions being too long for some pupils to sustain their concentration.

- 60 Since the previous inspection subject schemes of work have been reviewed. In most areas this has led to improvement in providing a more appropriate delivery of the curriculum. In some departments, for example in physical education, mathematics, art and design, science, modern foreign languages and geography, staff make good use of assessment data to determine pupils' progress and to inform future practice. On occasions, however, schemes of work are not used effectively to guide teaching, for example, in mathematics where some teachers follow the text book programme rather than the scheme.
- 61 In the Sixth Form there are a range of A-level, A/S-level, GNVQ and GCSE courses on offer. The school works in a Sixth Form consortium with 4 other schools and Wolverhampton College. This enables a large number of A/S, A-level and GNVQ courses to be offered. The majority of students fulfil the national expectations of following four A/S courses in a broad range of subjects in Year 12 and provide two or three A-level courses in Year 13. All students also attend a general religious education course which includes elements of personal, social and moral education. A small pilot group of students are also following a course in 'Understanding Industry'. This involves a two day course linking with local business and is effective in raising awareness of and involvement in the world of work. At the time of the previous inspection the efficiency of the Sixth Form courses was raised as an issue. The present arrangements are far more effective; and current staffing and resource costs are comparable to the budget income for Sixth Form provision. There is, however, some concern expressed by parents over the lack of opportunities for Sixth Form students to follow general educational courses such as physical education. There is also the difficulty for some students in travelling between the different institutions, not only in terms of time but also terms of 'belonging' to a particular school.
- 62 The school has a strategy for developing literacy across the curriculum in order to raise standards. This has led to a review of schemes of work, the displaying of key words in subject areas and in the use of writing frames. The impact is variable. There is good practice in some areas, for example in art and design, where pupils are encouraged to redraft work and often teachers refer to appropriate reading in the subject. However, overall progress is only satisfactory due to failure to implement and monitor the impact of the school's strategy in all curriculum areas.
- 63 At the time of the previous inspection comment was made regarding the insufficient development of numeracy skills outside of mathematics. Little has been done to change this judgement although there is now a co-ordinator to promote numeracy and it is a priority in the school's improvement plan. In mathematics work is being undertaken and there is some evidence of numeracy skills being developed in art and design with work on estimation and perspective and the use of graphs and data in geography, but overall this element of the curriculum is still underdeveloped.

- 64 Some parents felt that the provision for extra-curricular activities was limited. Evidence shows, however, that there is a good range of activities offered by the school and this does much to enrich the curriculum and sustain a positive attitude towards school. These activities include sport, visits, fieldtrips, links to community clubs, overseas visits, summer schools in numeracy and for the gifted and talented. As well as these a range of music options, including orchestra, choir, musicals and drama productions are offered. The physical education and music departments carefully monitor attendance at sporting activities and musical activities both in terms of gender and ethnicity.
- 65 Provision for personal, social and health education is divided between religious education and a rolling programme of one lesson per fortnight of personal, social and health education. The key aspects of careers, health, drugs, citizenship and sex education are delivered and appropriate policies are in place or in the process of being reviewed. The present arrangements, however, are not satisfactory. The lack of a regular timetabled lesson restricts the continuity of the provision and makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate. Pressure on time also limits the range of topics that can be discussed (for example study skills) and hinders effective planning. Provision for careers education is satisfactory and has taken place predominantly through careers evenings, meetings with careers advisers, talks, work experience in Year 10 and in Year 12 visits to university departments. There is also a careers library where books are available. Careers guidance is satisfactory.
- 66 The school is exploring new initiatives to widen understanding of the world of work, for example the 'Visible Futures' project targeted at Year 9 girls which is run by Prospect Careers and the Education Action Zone and is designed to raise girls' aspirations in terms of jobs and training opportunities. Opportunities for work related learning are underdeveloped at this time.
- 67 There are good links with other Sixth Form providers via a local consortium of four schools. This enables students to be offered a wide range of courses and there is effective liaison to monitor and track students' progress. There are also good links with feeder primary schools. Regular meetings take place and mathematics and English teachers from the school have delivered and observed lessons in the primary phase. There are also specific subject links to raise confidence amongst pupils such as the 'Maths Challenge' and booster classes. Students from the school have also been actively involved with local parishes in raising money for, and supporting, charities. The school is also developing business links particularly to support the vocation courses, for example, *Holiday Hypermarket* have supported developments in Travel and Tourism classes.
- 68 The school's overall provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's mission statement and aims, which were recently reviewed by consultation with governors, staff and pupils, emphasise this aspect of pupils' education. The Home-School Agreement also clearly identifies the rights and responsibilities of the school, pupils and parents.
- 69 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. This is seen both in assemblies and many tutor periods where teachers share particular thoughts for the day and give time for

reflection. In English a good example was seen in a Year 11 group where the teacher gave personal insights into a specific poem and showed awareness of and sensitivity to the qualities of the poem. This provoked positive responses in the pupils.

- 70 Moral education is good. Pupils know right from wrong, they respect others and they understand and generally uphold the school's rules and values. The positive and supportive ethos in the school, the lack of aggression, racial tension and hostility are evidence that the school is successful in establishing good moral standards. There are many occasions when moral issues are addressed both in lessons and in assemblies. For example, in a Year 11 assembly on giving time to lonely people, pupils were asked to consider the concept of caring and this led onto Mother's Day and that this should be more a matter of relationships than presents.
- 71 The provision for pupils' social development is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in trips and visits, including retreats. Sixth Form students help in a paired reading scheme with younger pupils and all pupils have the opportunity to take part in charity events. Relationships between pupils are good. The vast majority of parents commented positively in the way the school helps pupils become 'mature and responsible'. Older pupils have access to the Junior Sports Leader Award and these pupils often give support to younger pupils. There is a school council which has contributed positively to improving some of the school facilities (dinner, outside seating areas). Sixth Form students effectively help staff duty teams at break and lunchtime.
- 72 Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. It is promoted actively through religious education where different religions are studied in addition to Christianity. There is also good practice in art and design where pupils are actively encouraged to share and celebrate different cultural values and traditions. Similarly in music and English different cultural traditions are explored. There is also an effective tradition of music, drama and choir in the school. In English pupils experience a wide range of literature, including classics and more contemporary works. The school also uses local theatre groups, for example *Gazebo* and *The Zip Theatre Company*, to hold workshops for pupils. Pupils are also actively encouraged to participate in local parish work. However, the potential of pupils as a resource to contribute to both multi-cultural and multi-faith learning are under-developed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 73 The school effectively ensures the health and safety of pupils. There are sound policies and practices and the health, safety and welfare of pupils are given appropriately high priority. Fire and other safety equipment is checked periodically, and the procedures for recording and reporting accidents effectively implemented. Departments undertake effective risk assessments. The school continues to effectively support and care for its pupils as it did at the time of the last inspection.

- 74 Teachers know individual pupils very well, and are aware of their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. They respond to them in a positive and supportive way. Pupils with special education needs receive a high level of individual support from learning support assistants. The good relationships between teachers, learning support assistants and pupils encourage a very positive atmosphere in the school, which provides a good learning environment. Expectations of work and conduct are high, and nearly all pupils respond to these positively. However, sometimes the standard of presentation of some pupils' work is not sufficiently high, and some teachers do not appear to challenge this appropriately. Pupils value the merit system, and appreciate the certificates awarded.
- 75 There are satisfactory child protection procedures in place, which meet statutory requirements. Liaison with support agencies is good, and with the education welfare officer it is very good. The implementation of a co-ordinated and progressive programme of personal, health and social education will further contribute to the support and personal development of pupils.
- 76 There is strong support for the inclusion of Traveller children in the life of the school; it is well led. The attendance and attainment of Traveller children is regularly monitored, and their learning is effectively supported. There is good liaison with Traveller parents. There is strong leadership from the senior management team to promote the achievement of black heritage pupils, who are especially supported by a teacher funded from the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant and two support staff. Together, these staff have clear roles and are effectively deployed in reducing disaffection, raising achievement and promoting inclusion, and are a strength of the school.
- 77 The school gives all pupils with special educational needs access to all the subjects of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. However, the teaching programme does not always meet their needs. The best practice was seen in art and design, music and physical education where the work was well matched to pupils' needs.
- 78 The school's procedures to promote attendance are good, although the overall level of attendance is well below the national average, and unauthorised absence above the average nationally. The attendance record of the majority of pupils is satisfactory. There are a number of identified pupils and families whose children do not attend school regularly. These include some of the Traveller children. There is regular encouragement and recording of the attendance levels of individual tutor groups, and pupils monitor and record their attendance in their homework diaries. The pastoral administrative staff effectively monitor registers daily, and endeavour to make contact with parents when pupils are not in school, particularly those with an attendance record of less than 80%. Heads of year monitor attendance records, and meet with the education welfare officer weekly.
- 79 The school works very co-operatively with the education welfare officer to support families who do not appreciate the importance of their children attending school regularly. Legal action is now starting to be taken against families whose children do not attend school. The school works well, but not always successfully, along with the teacher of Traveller children

and the education welfare officer, to try to ensure that Traveller children attend school regularly.

- 80 The school makes good efforts to reintegrate pupils who have been out of school for long periods, by negotiating and setting up personal timetables. In conjunction with the education welfare officer, the school endeavours to establish college and extended work experience placements for disaffected older pupils.
- 81 Registers are taken at the start of lessons, and there are procedures in place to check whether pupils not in a particular lesson were in school at the start of the day. There are random truancy checks on identified groups and individual pupils.
- 82 The school has regular liaison with the Wolverhampton Reducing Disaffection Team, and individual pupils receive regular support from team members in school. Pupils recognised as being vulnerable are able to receive regular support from a member of staff they have chosen and identified.
- 83 Pupils' academic progress is monitored within individual subject departments. For older pupils there are records of expected grades in examinations and their progress towards achieving those grades is reviewed regularly. The school is developing further systems to ensure that pupils' attainment is assessed throughout the school against national standards and that progress of individuals is monitored throughout the curriculum. In some subject areas, for example physical education, art and design and music, assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is of a high standard.
- 84 At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum test results are used well to set targets for pupils. The school meets statutory requirements of outside agencies such as Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the national examination boards.
- 85 Teachers make less effective use of assessment information to guide their curriculum and lesson planning for pupils. In some subject areas, for example mathematics and geography, teachers use assessment information well to guide their plans for what pupils should learn next, but it is less effectively used in areas such as English, science and information and communication technology.
- 86 There are good systems in place to monitor and record pupils' effort and motivation on a regular basis, and these assessments are regularly reviewed with pupils by form tutors. Heads of year play an effective role in overseeing pupils' personal development, and the school has identified the pastoral system throughout the school as an area for future development.
- 87 The school meets the recommendations of the Code of Practice for pupils with statements of need. Appropriate records are maintained and parents are consulted regularly. However, for a number of pupils, the targets identified for their future development are too broad and lack clarity. This makes the planning of the work they need to do problematic and so reduces the progress they make.

- 88 The school very fully evaluates the attainment of pupils of different genders, abilities and ethnic origins, together with that of Traveller children. The school works well in supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language, who make appropriate progress for their individual levels of ability.
- 89 The school's procedures and practice with regard to exclusions are satisfactory. There have been 29 fixed period exclusions during first half of this school year. There have been no permanent exclusions.
- 90 The quality of support and advice provided for pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, by the monitoring of their academic progress and setting target grades for national examinations, is very good. There is regular review and discussion of pupils' progress towards those targets. Procedures for monitoring the progress of younger pupils across the curriculum are under-developed.
- 91 In some subject departments, pupils are successfully encouraged to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils have regular individual discussions with their form tutors to identify and celebrate their strengths, and identify their weaknesses. In their annual reports, pupils are able to identify their areas of achievement, and share those with their parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 92 The school successfully encourages a good working partnership with the majority of parents as it did at the time of the last inspection. Most parents are very supportive of the school, which they hold in high regard. Parents feel that they can approach the school with concerns and problems. Through the parents' questionnaire, to which there was a good response, parents confirm that the school expects pupils to work and achieve their best, and that pupils make good progress. Parents appreciate the positive attitudes promoted by the school, and acknowledge that the school values individual pupils highly. The concerns expressed by parents concerning the inconsistency of homework set were found to be justified.
- 93 Some parents would like more frequent reports concerning their child's progress, and not all are aware that an interim report can be requested. Parents are required to sign pupils' homework diaries weekly. These diaries provide a good means of communication between home and school, and for parents to be regularly informed about their child's progress and achievements.
- 94 Heads of year and form tutors are available for consultation by parents. Parents are involved at an appropriately early stage if problems occur. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved with, and contribute to, the Annual Review process.
- 95 The recently appointed home school liaison officer plays a valuable role in providing parents with a first point of contact within the school. In conjunction with the pastoral administration staff, she ensures that there is early contact with parents when pupils are absent, and that the

monitoring of pupils' attendance is regular and effective. A small minority of parents do not appreciate the importance of their children's regular attendance at school, and the need to arrive punctually. The school endeavours, in conjunction with the education welfare officer, to maintain links with these families.

- 96 The school encourages parents of prospective pupils to visit the school, with their children, and the process of introducing pupils into Year 7 is well organised and co-ordinated.
- 97 The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents conform to statutory requirements. Regular newsletters give parents a good range of useful information.
- 98 In response to consultation with parents and an analysis of attendance at parents' consultation evenings, these now commence at 4.30 pm. Attendance has increased since this change. Average attendance at these meetings is between 60% and 65%. The school has also arranged information evenings for parents about literacy and the school's sex education policy. Although the majority of parents take advantage of these opportunities to be involved in the education of their children, a significant minority do not. If parents do not attend the consultation evenings the school contacts them to endeavour to arrange an alternative appointment.
- 99 The quality and range of information available to parents through pupils' annual reports is good. They give information about pupils' attainment compared with national standards. Reports describe the progress made by pupils, and indicate how they can improve further. Targets are set for improvement, and pupils have an appropriate opportunity to contribute, describing their best achievements and targets for the future.
- 100 Music productions and concerts are very well supported, and enjoyed by parents. Parents provide valuable assistance with sporting events and fixtures. There is an active Parents Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA), which is well supported by both parents and staff. Through fundraising events, the association provides additional resources for the school, and the PTFA meetings are effectively used as a forum to discuss wider school issues. A number of parents regularly provide valuable help in school, hearing pupils read.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 101 The headteacher, appointed two years ago has provided clear and very effective leadership for this school since that time. She has established a focus on improving the quality of education and raising standards. The newly established senior management team is now having a further impact on improving the school. There has been a high level of classroom monitoring by senior managers and supportive feedback for teachers to improve the quality of teaching. Heads of department have begun a process of monitoring the quality of teaching but this is having variable impact on improvement.
- 102 The senior managers evaluate the work of the school carefully including the use of a detailed analysis of attainment data. The school compares its performance both with schools nationally and with similar schools. It is also monitoring the current standards pupils attain

against their previous attainments. Such information is provided for heads of department to aid their monitoring programme. They are beginning to use the information to identify weaknesses in the planning and teaching of their subjects and then supportively manage departmental improvements.

- 103 The school's senior managers monitor the relative achievements and progress of boys and girls, Traveller pupils and of ethnic minority pupils in core subjects and overall at GCSE. It supports departments in monitoring attainment and setting targets to improve the progress of boys and girls at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. There is some monitoring of the relative progress of ethnic minority pupils within departments, although this is still under-developed.
- 104 The school has clear aims, which commit it to equality of access for all and to the improvement of standards. In the main these aims are realised in practice. However, current curriculum organisation limits pupils' access and attainment in information and communication technology in both key stages.
- 105 The managers and teachers are fully committed to continuing to improve the quality of education and the standards that pupils attain. They have the capacity to continue the significant improvements already achieved.
- 106 The governing body is very well informed about and fully conversant with its roles and responsibilities. There is an effective committee structure, which enables the governing body to manage its responsibilities and day-to-day work very effectively. The budget is set appropriately against the school's development plan. The budget is managed to sustain a small carry forward this year although a small deficit was managed last year. This reflects the effective long-term strategic management of the school by governors. Governors seek to ensure the maximum impact of additional funding the school receives, for example, from the Education Action Zone as well as additional targeted funding from the local education authority. The additional funding for special educational needs through the resource unit is being used appropriately although the monitoring of the use of these funds is not sufficiently rigorous.
- 107 Governors are well informed about the work of the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses. They have set appropriate priorities for the development of the school. The school sets realistic and challenging targets for pupils' future attainment. The setting of targets is based upon a wide range of assessment information.
- 108 Whilst the school is following the four 'best value' principles in its work, the limited evaluation of the provision for special educational needs means it does not yet fully follow all best value procedures. However, overall the school does successfully achieve best value.
- 109 There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers who are generally deployed effectively. There are a number of very effective support staff and teachers who support pupils with special educational needs. The school makes good use of the additional staffing resources available from the local education authority to support pupils from a travelling background and those for whom English is an additional

language.

- 110 Although the school has faced recruitment difficulties there is a full complement of teachers. However, the geography department whilst having specialist teachers does not have an established head of department.
- 111 The school is housed in a variety of old and new buildings. They provide for all specialist subject needs. They are well looked after and provide a welcoming learning environment. However, public spaces have only limited displays of pupils' work and this detracts from the overall learning environment for pupils.
- 112 The consortium arrangements for the Sixth Form are effective and efficient. Students speak highly of their support and teaching, however, there is only limited social space for students and their almost full teaching programme limits their access to the schools' information and communication technology resources.
- 113 There are good out-door social areas and extensive playing fields for all sporting activities. The school's facilities are used extensively by the community.
- 114 There are broadly sufficient learning resources. The school has sufficient computers to support both teachers and pupils but at the time of the inspection only a small number were connected to the Internet. This substantially reduces the opportunities for pupils to carry out independent research to support their learning in the subjects of the curriculum. Sixth Form students particularly identified this. There are limited book resources in the library and this also reduces the opportunities to develop pupils' research and independent learning skills.
- 115 There have been changes in personnel in key management posts since the previous inspection. The management of the school has developed further from the highly effective management found at that time.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 116 In order to continue the development of the school and the improvements in standards and quality governors and senior managers should:
- i) Raise the standards attained in information and communication technology by:
- Ensuring that the full National Curriculum programme is taught.
[7, 13, 56, 59, 182, 191, 203]
 - Ensuring that all subjects identify their use of information and communication technology in their schemes of work.
[4, 6, 7, 13, 40, 121, 140, 196, 199]
 - Ensuring that as many computers as possible are linked to the Internet.
[114, 195]

- Reviewing the accessibility of the computers in the library particularly for Sixth Form students. [40, 167,114]
- ii) Improve the focus of individual education plans in subjects for pupils with special educational needs by:
- Ensuring that subject managers and teachers identify subject responses to individual learning targets for these pupils. [47, 57, 123, 139, 194]
 - Ensuring that the targets are clearly focused and will promote progress. [47, 77, 87, 124]
- iii) Develop the role of pupils in their own education by:
- Increasing the range and opportunities for personal study and research. [19, 29, 40, 52, 155, 194]
 - Further developing the current processes for recording achievement to include a wider range of self-assessment by pupils. [83, 86, 91]
- iv) Improve the monitoring of homework, marking and the personal, social and health education programme by:
- Ensuring that heads of department monitor the marking of pupils' work. [85, 131, 150, 154]
 - Ensuring that heads of department monitor the setting and marking of homework. [50, 51, 92]
 - Ensuring that the personal, social and health education programme planning and delivery is monitored to provided a coherent range of learning experiences for pupils. [55, 65]

The numbers in brackets relate to the main paragraphs of this report where these issues are mentioned.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS – RESOURCE PROVISION

117 The school has a resource provision for 23 pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need for moderate learning difficulties. The pupils have made unsatisfactory progress over time against their intellectual ability until very recently, as their individual learning difficulties have not been clearly identified in such a way as to allow teachers to set work that is suited to their specific needs. However, where there is additional support in class, the pupils generally make better progress as they have a clearer understanding of the

curriculum and what it is they are to do. In art and design, music and physical education, pupils make good progress in line with their peers, as they are offered work that suits their abilities and are allowed to excel in subjects and to reach their true potential.

- 118 Teaching for these pupils is unsatisfactory overall. Teachers until very recently, have not had enough information about each pupils' specific needs to plan work in small enough steps to allow pupils access to a curriculum suited to their level of attainment. However, when a learning support assistant is available, they are used well by teachers, often supporting a small group of pupils well. The recently reformed special educational needs team have the necessary expertise of the different kinds of learning difficulties. A suitable programme is in place to develop the knowledge and understanding of staff across the school. Pupils' individual needs are now identified adequately by special educational needs staff and information is beginning to be disseminated to other members of staff, in order for them to plan relevant work and set achievable targets for progress. Teachers in the art and design, music and physical education departments, set targets for improvement on individual education plans, and this has a direct result on the good progress pupils make in these subjects. The pastoral system supports and guides pupils well socially and emotionally.
- 119 Pupils are mostly well behaved, and the majority have good attitudes to their work. Most concentrate adequately for short periods and try hard when work is presented which is at the correct level or which interests them. During small group or paired lessons pupils show higher levels of concentration. There are a very small number of pupils who find it very difficult to conform to the school rules and whose behaviour occasionally disrupts the class and affects other pupils' learning and progress. These pupils have been clearly identified by the special educational needs team as having behaviour problems. The school has started to address this issue through staff training of heads of year so that a whole school approach is in place in September 2001.
- 120 The school has tried to address the issue of inclusion, in that these pupils have full access to all the subjects and extra curricular activities offered. However, pupils do not always have a full curriculum, which suits their intellectual ability, or individual needs, and this significantly affects the progress they make. In art and design, music and physical education, pupils are receiving a curriculum which suits their intellectual and creative ability. The curriculum policy for physical education is an excellent document which not only identifies areas of weakness but of strength and excellence amongst pupils with special educational needs.
- 121 Information and communication technology is not used adequately to support pupils with special educational needs although the school has very recently put in place eight computers for this end. The computers are used each lunchtime for a homework club. Many pupils with special educational needs take full advantage of this facility.
- 122 When pupils are offered small group tuition to develop the higher skills of reading, for example, when reading and scanning for information in a non-fiction book, they make better progress as their individual needs are more fully addressed.

- 123 The leadership and management of the provision for moderate learning difficulties are good. The newly appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs has a thorough understanding of the needs of the school. A useful audit and good long and short-term development plans, though only very recently in place, have begun to be implemented well.
- 124 The school meets the recommendations of the Code of Practice for special educational needs for statemented pupils; parents are consulted on a regular basis and annual reviews of statements are well managed. For a number of pupils, targets on individual education plans, though in place, lack clarity or appropriateness in order to judge the progress pupils can make. This was an area of weakness in the previous inspection report. In some subjects, for example, art and design, music and physical education, targets for improvement have been set by the subject department. These are useful and are appropriate to suit the needs of the pupils and benefits both teachers and pupils greatly.
- 125 The funding for special educational needs is managed adequately, but there is no clear identification in some departments of how it is used or allocated to benefit the pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This area requires review so that pupils receive their full entitlement to a relevant curriculum suited to their individual needs and which ensures their progress.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

182

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	21	40	29	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	735	86
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	271	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	151	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	57

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.8
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.5
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	78	69	147

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	34	40
	Girls	39	37	28
	Total	75	71	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (59)	48 (43)	46 (32)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (54)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (24)	25 (16)	17 (5)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	32	33
	Girls	57	37	33
	Total	106	69	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (56)	47 (53)	45 (32)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (17)	21 (21)	16 (16)
	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	73	71	144

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	15	62	70
	Girls	24	59	63
	Total	39	121	133
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	27 (23)	84 (82)	92 (89)
	National	40 (40)	91 (91)	96 (97)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31 (29)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	14 28.6
	National	73.2

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	12	14	26

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	11.8	10.9	11.3 (11.4)	2	2	2 (n/a)
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	n/a	n/a
	National		n/a

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	n/a	n/a
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	105
Black – African heritage	15
Black – other	0
Indian	64
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	630
Any other minority ethnic group	6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	10	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	1	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	42	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	293

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.6
Key Stage 4	20.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	2,037,033
Total expenditure	2,053,225
Expenditure per pupil	2,477
Balance brought forward from previous year	-25,140
Balance carried forward to next year	-41,332

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	821
Number of questionnaires returned	393

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	50	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	38	54	4	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	51	9	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	43	17	8	3
The teaching is good.	40	48	5	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	45	18	5	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	38	6	4	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	33	2	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	25	51	13	6	5
The school is well led and managed.	37	46	7	5	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	52	7	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	39	14	7	11

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

ENGLISH

- 126 Current standards of attainment in English are below national averages at the ages of 14 and 16. These standards represent good achievement by pupils in Years 7 to 9 given their attainment on entry, and satisfactory achievement by pupils in Years 10 and 11 given their prior attainment in national tests. At A-level the standard is in line with those typically found, representing satisfactory achievement over the period of the course. These standards reflect the quality of teaching, which is good overall but lacks consistency in Years 10 and 11.
- 127 2000 test results for pupils at age 14 were well below the national average. Using average points scores for comparison with all schools, pupils' performance was well below the national average, and below average when compared with similar schools. In comparison with maths and science pupils' performance in English was similar overall, being slightly higher at Level 5 or above and lower at Level 6 or above. Average points scores for English over four years have fluctuated markedly. The trend is below the improvement shown nationally. Teachers substantially over-estimated pupils' results in 2000.
- 128 This variable past performance has arisen from a combination of factors including the inconsistent application of assessment procedures, a reduction in teaching time to allow for expressive arts in Years 7 and 8, and long-term staffing difficulties. The latter had a particularly severe impact on Year 9 last year. Despite these problems, and given that pupils' attainment on entry has usually been well below average, most pupils made at least satisfactory and often good progress to achieve the standards they did at the age of 14. The English department now has a more stable staffing situation, has successfully revised the scheme of work for Year 7 and begun revision of Years 8 and 9, and sorted out its assessment procedures. It is still difficult for the department to deliver the important and valuable literacy programme in Year 7 in the time allocated.
- 129 2000 results for A*-C grades in GCSE English were significantly below the national average for all pupils. Results for A*-G grades were slightly above national averages for boys and below for girls. The A*-C results represent well above average achievement given pupils' prior attainment in Year 9 tests in 1998. Results for A*-C grades in GCSE English literature were significantly below the national average, and slightly below it for A*-G grades. Over the last four years, apart from 1998, the trend in GCSE English performance for A*-C grades has been a rising one. 2000 results in this grade band were the best since 1995.
- 130 Based on work seen during the inspection, the current standard of attainment at age 14 is below average. This is higher than might be expected given the pupils' well below average attainment on entry and the well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and represents good achievement by many pupils. Higher attainers in Year 9 understand how different ways of presenting information can affect its impact and can use these effectively themselves. They know the key scenes in *Macbeth* and can describe their

dramatic qualities. Most are confident about reading or speaking aloud and do so with reasonable clarity and fluency. Even among these pupils, however, standards of writing are affected by errors in spelling and sentence punctuation. These occur more persistently among middle and lower attainers in this year group and Years 7 and 8, and together with such problems as misuse of capitals, poor handwriting and scrappy presentation, they depress standards of attainment overall.

- 131 Based on work seen during the inspection, the standard of attainment is below average at the age of 16. The standard is, however, what might be expected given pupils' performance in national tests in 1999 and represents satisfactory progress over the key stage. Higher attainers have appropriate knowledge and understanding of set texts. Their extended writing is often thorough and conscientious. Lower attainers are able to write at some length and structure their work appropriately provided that they have a strong framework to work within. For many pupils problems with spelling and the correct use of full stops persist. Speaking skills are relatively undeveloped across the ability range: replies to questions are often brief. A few pupils read aloud with clarity, accuracy and expression, but many others stumble over unfamiliar words. Most pupils are able to listen attentively and use this skill to acquire and consolidate their knowledge and understanding of English.
- 132 From a limited observation of work in the Sixth Form, standards of attainment are average, and in line with students' prior attainment. Students can take notes and annotate a text appropriately. They have a good grasp of their set texts and can make reasonably confident judgements about characters and relationships, for example in their study of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Higher attaining students understand and can explain the use of symbols in that play. Most read aloud with confidence and fluency and make sensible and thoughtful contributions to class discussion.
- 133 The contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy is variable. Work in modern foreign languages, for example, supports speaking and listening skills well. Pupils' standard of speaking is above average as a result. There is good extended writing in Years 10 and 11. There are limited opportunities for reading, however. In mathematics, displays of key words are not used or made the focus of a lesson, and writing and reading are under-developed. Pupils in information and communication technology have few opportunities to practise literacy skills. There is insufficient display of or emphasis on key vocabulary for the subject. In art and design, on the other hand, pupils are encouraged to annotate their work and write about it at length with understanding. They are given imaginative tasks for writing, such as an exchange of letters between Van Gogh and his brother. They are expected to read for research and listen carefully. In music, writing opportunities are more limited, but pupils use appropriate technical language well. This is also the case in geography, where pupils update a geographical glossary which underpins their knowledge and understanding. They get few opportunities for extended writing, however, and reading, speaking and listening skills are under-developed. The situation is little different in science. These inconsistencies in approach to the development of literacy and the variation in emphasis given to different skills by subject areas make their contribution just about satisfactory overall.

- 134 In English, pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall, being good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, and good in the Sixth Form. The difference arises from the fact that some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are reluctant, uninvolved or passive, and some teachers have difficulty in breaking down these barriers to learning. Pupils respond particularly well when teachers provide opportunities for them to contribute actively to the lesson, use stimulating resources and expect greater than normal effort. This was the case, for example, in a Year 7 class when pupils responded enthusiastically to their teacher's 'five senses' approach to Osbert Sitwell's poem *Winter the Huntsman* and produced a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to describe the pictures and feelings created by the poem. It was also the case in a Year 11 class where the teacher encouraged pupils to work collaboratively on an analysis of a group of poems in the GCSE anthology and present their conclusions to the rest of the class. They responded well to this opportunity to take responsibility for their learning. Sixth form students responded particularly well to their teacher's request for 'quick quotes' from *A Streetcar Named Desire*. They were challenged by the need to recall important quotations from the play which would later support their written judgements.
- 135 Teaching is good overall. Learning reflects the quality of teaching and is similarly good overall. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson seen because the teacher did not plan sufficient opportunities or time for pupil involvement and gave over-long explanations. As a result pupils were unable to take in all the information and became detached and uninvolved, producing little that was constructive. Occasionally, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teachers did not plan for or missed opportunities for discussion or feedback and it was in this key stage that the most variation in the quality of teaching and learning occurred. Teaching is usually good, however, and sometimes very good. Teachers manage their pupils well, and as a result pupils behave well and are attentive and co-operative in the classroom. Teachers' choice of activity and feedback to individuals or groups of pupils effectively establishes what pupils know and understand, and supports and extends their learning. In a very good Year 7 lesson, for example, the teacher used 'brainstorming' effectively to explore a wide range of vocabulary describing feelings, and her spurring them on to produce more vivid examples helped pupils attain at a higher level than expected. Another teacher's very good question and answer session about 'tone of voice' with Year 11 pupils helped them to understand how qualities like 'exhilaration', 'naivety' and 'effusiveness' could co-exist within the same poem. In a Year 13 lesson the teacher effectively drew students' attention to points of detail in their set text which created links or connections between different characters or situations. As a result they were able to focus on key areas of the play for their own subsequent research.
- 136 There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in 1996. Against a background of pupils' low attainment on entry and recent staffing difficulties GCSE examination results are now close to those obtaining at that time. Although standards of attainment are below average they represent at least satisfactory levels of achievement. The quality of teaching remains good overall, with the reservation that monitoring of teaching to improve planning and consistency continues to be necessary. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The recent appointment of a second in department has enabled the head of

department to delegate significant responsibilities and thus enhance the department's potential for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

- 137 The mathematics teaching team is energetic and hard working. The department runs a breakfast club and after school revision classes. These were observed during the inspection along with 21 lessons, including three in the Sixth Form. A sample of work was also analysed.
- 138 When they start at the school, the attainment of pupils is well below the national average in mathematics. Attainment in mathematics continues to be well below the national average at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Able pupils do as well as pupils from similar schools, but results as a whole are below average. Pupils make good progress in Years 9,10 and 11 so that by the end of Year 11 they have achieved more than their attainment at the start of Year 7 would predict. The more able pupils make particularly good progress in these years. Girls, however, do not do make as much progress as boys. Pupils who have English as an additional language do as well in class as their peers, and there is evidence that they do slightly better at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Standards of attainment at GCSE have fluctuated over the past few years reflecting the ability of the pupils. There has been little overall change since the last inspection. The performance at Key Stage 3 has been more stable, but with an improvement below the national trend. A small number of pupils take mathematics to A-level. The standard that pupils reach varies due to the small number involved. The pass rate is high and able pupils do very well.
- 139 Able pupils do well also in Years 9, 10 and 11. Pupils in the top set in Year 9 confidently use correlation and lines of best fit in data handling. In Year 10 they have a very good grasp of trigonometry and can tackle questions which demand that several steps of working are put together. In Year 11 they are able to cope with the demands of the Higher Tier GCSE paper. Some very weak pupils in Year 9, including some with statements of special educational needs, also make good progress. They are confident with simple number facts and are gaining good mental facility with number bonds and tables, aided by the techniques of the National Numeracy Strategy. There are other pupils in the school who are not gaining a wide enough repertoire of simple numeracy skills. They are too dependent on strategies such as simple adding on. Over the school as a whole progress is good and improving. Pupils in Years 9,10 and 11 have a good knowledge of their current level of attainment, their expected grades and their target grades. They understand how with hard work they can achieve more than their expected grade. This level of added challenge is leading to improving standards. Some pupils in Year 7, however, are repeating too much work that they have met in their primary schools. Some pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans. These rarely give targets for mathematics, and when they do the targets are too general and based on increases in attainment which are too large. A potentially significant way of increasing standards and celebrating success for these pupils is therefore under-developed.

- 140 Teaching is good in Years 9,10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and this leads to exposition of high quality. In teaching trigonometry, for example, a teacher actively made links to other areas of mathematics such as angle facts with parallel lines and the theorem of Pythagoras. In this way pupils are helped to see the unity of mathematics and are not merely presented with a set of disjointed results. The introduction of a three-part lesson on the style of the National Numeracy Strategy is improving teaching in Year 7. It is giving variety of activity and making for lessons that have lively beginnings. There is, however, insufficient focus on the aims of the 'starter tasks', and the main part of the lesson does not build enough on pupils' achievements in primary school. It is too dependent on a particular published text. In particular work observed on handling data repeated much earlier work on types of average. Following the departmental scheme of work pupils' knowledge should increase to include skills on formulating a question and collecting and interpreting data. These skills, along with other opportunities for practical work, are not however sufficiently embedded into all the teaching. Across all year groups there are also insufficient opportunities for discussion between pupils. This leads to an emphasis on technique at the expense of understanding. This in particular is hampering the progress of girls in Years 10 and 11. Good practice in this area is, however, present in the department. In one Year 8 lesson the structured use of discussion between pupils for a clearly defined period of time produced high levels of thinking with some pupils able to speculate how to calculate the mean for grouped data. This practice is not sufficiently spread across the teaching team. In the Sixth Form teaching is good with clear explanations showing the teachers' good subject knowledge. A lesson on Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation involved very effective student participation in an experiment. The department has good information and communication technology packages and the scheme of work makes clear where they can enrich teaching. There is not, however, adequate available time in the information and communication technology rooms to enable this to take place.
- 141 There is some progress in developing numeracy skills in other subjects. There is good practice in food technology where a particular emphasis is placed on the accurate measuring of ingredients. In geography a Year 10 class applied number skills well to plan the development of a shanty town. Here numeracy skills were able to contribute to a lively exercise that promoted group work, discussion and deeper understanding of the issues facing other communities. However some skills are weaker, such as graphs that are drawn without accuracy or the use of a pencil. The opportunities for numeracy to raise standards across subjects are not yet fully developed.
- 142 Teaching has improved since the last inspection. The structured three-part lesson is helping to raise standards. However, expectations in Year 7 do not fully reflect what pupils arriving in the school are able to do and some teaching is still too restricted by a published scheme.
- 143 The leadership of the department is good and is characterised by energy, efficiency, humanity and humour. Monitoring of pupils' progress is very good. Pupils have target grades that are well understood. Pupils' past performance is analysed for value added and differences by gender and ethnicity. Teachers make written evaluations of their teaching using these results. Teaching and exercise books are monitored by the head of department

who then gives feedback to promote high standards. The long-term absence of a member of the department is being managed satisfactorily. There are excellent links with the feeder primary schools with maths competitions, a 'booster' class for Year 6 pupils and there have been two successful numeracy summer schools.

SCIENCE

- 144 After several years of declining standards the science results in the year 2000 showed an improvement.
- 145 In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, pupils' scores have been well below national standards and have declined each year since 1996. They improved in the year 2000 and although still well below national standards the results are a significant improvement on the previous years' performances. Teachers' assessments were close to the test results obtained in 2000. Girls' scores were lower than those for boys. Science results were closer to the national average than those for either English or mathematics.
- 146 Pupils enter the school at the age of eleven with test scores in science well below the national average. From a review of their current work, pupils make steady progress to the end of Year 9 but remain well below the average for their age. By the age of 14 pupils have a good knowledge of the working of the human body. They understand the process of respiration, how the blood circulates and the structure of the heart. Digestive processes are understood and pupils can carry out tests to determine whether food contains starch, protein or fat. Pupils have a good knowledge of optical phenomena and understand how reflection, refraction and total internal reflection of light occur and can draw diagrams to illustrate what happens in each case. They use simple equations, for example, to calculate the speed of a body or the pressure exerted over a known area and understand the concept of efficiency when energy changes from one form to another.
- 147 The GCSE results in science for the year 2000 showed an increase over those for the previous year though they are still below the national average for the subject. In 2000 about one quarter of pupils gained a grade A*-C compared to a national average of almost one half but the number of pupils gaining a grade A*-G was only a little below the national figure. When comparing the achievements of girls and boys to their national averages girls performed better than boys.
- 148 Overall, pupils by the age of 16 have made better than average progress when judged against the levels they achieved at the age of 14. GCSE results in science in 2000 were close to the average for the whole school, were not as good as results in English but better than those in mathematics.
- 149 From a review of pupils' current work in Years 10 and 11 most pupils use scientific terminology correctly. They understand the structure of the atom, how this links with an element's position in the Periodic Table and can carry out calculations using *Relative Formula Mass* correctly. They build on work they did on white light in earlier years to develop their understanding of how all waves behave and use ripple tanks to study

diffraction. Pupils show a knowledge of the electromagnetic spectrum and extend earlier studies of the refraction of white light to include calculations using refractive index and the speed of light. They develop their knowledge of cell structure and the part played by chromosomes, genes and DNA in human reproduction and understand the mechanism by which some diseases can be inherited.

- 150 Up to the age of sixteen the standard of the presentation of work is variable and generally below average. Although some pupils take great pride in working neatly many do not and fail to use simple drawing aids such as rulers. Instead, they are content to underline headings, draw diagrams of apparatus or tables of results freehand and often in ink. The results are untidy and lack clarity. Similarly, graph-drawing skills are poorly developed. Most pupils join one point to the next so that a straight line graph is a series of short lines instead of one best fit line.
- 151 The small number of students studying science subjects in the Sixth Form makes a statistical analysis of their results unreliable. Some students obtain very good grades in their A-level examinations and although the average level of achievement is below the national average most of them have made very good progress during their time in school.
- 152 In the Sixth Form students use scientific terminology fluently and often show an expert knowledge of their specialist subjects. They can use knowledge from other areas of study and apply it to new situations building a conceptual understanding of underlying theory from a series of individual facts.
- 153 The teaching of science is good overall. Although some unsatisfactory teaching was seen with pupils up to the age of 14 it was offset by some very good teaching with the same age group. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in classes of older pupils up to the age of sixteen and teaching in the Sixth Form was very good. Good teaching was characterised by a brisk pace suitable for the level of pupils' ability and well-planned lessons with a variety of activities. Lessons had clear aims and were well structured so that pupils understood what was expected from them at each stage. There were good relationships between teacher and pupils and further activities for pupils who finished their work early. Class control was good. Unsatisfactory teaching was the result of confused aims and a lack of clear structure to allow pupils to make progress but also to challenge and stimulate them. Inattention by pupils was tolerated especially towards the end of double lessons, which are too long for some pupils to maintain their concentration and they make less progress. The overall quality of learning is good. Pupils of all ages enjoy lessons where there is a range of varied activities and they work safely and carefully when doing practical work. Teachers show a good command of the subject matter and especially in Sixth Form teaching they show expert knowledge, especially of the difficulties involved in some of the more challenging practical work. Teachers show that they know the pupils well and pupils make good progress where the atmosphere is calm and relaxed.
- 154 Since the previous inspection the standard of teaching and learning has improved though only in the last year has there been an improvement in National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE results. Monitoring of pupils' progress and the assessment of

their work is now generally good though there are times when teachers do not check that the targets they have set for pupils are being achieved. There has been no improvement in the use of information and communication technology and pupils have insufficient opportunity to use data logging equipment or to use software to process or display their results from practical work. There is no overall difference in the performance of boys or girls. In 2000 girls performed better at GCSE level but worse in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9.

- 155 The leadership and management of the science department are good. The head of department is new to the school but has already produced a clear action plan, highlighting priorities and costing proposals. The scheme of work is rigorous and many of the deficiencies seen in the department have already been identified and plans put in place for their improvement. However, there are still several areas for development. Although exam and test results showed some improvement in 2000 there is a need for a sustained improvement over several years. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to research a topic and produce a piece of extended writing on a scientific theme. The library provision for such work and the opportunity to use information and communication technology skills to find information are inadequate as are the opportunities to use the Internet or to word process the finished work.

ART AND DESIGN

- 156 This is a very good department that has no significant weaknesses.
- 157 Although there is no formal assessment data for the end of Key Stage 3 for art and design, evidence from work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils are attaining levels expected of the majority of pupils of this age. For 16 year old pupils in 2000 the most recent GCSE examination results show that 84% of the pupils entered gained grades A*-C. This is well above the national average and has been the trend for the past three years. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. There is no difference between boys and girls attainment but they do significantly better in art and design than in their other subjects. A-level results have improved since the last inspection and are now consistently above the national average for percentage of students attaining the higher grades or a pass grade.
- 158 Standards of work in Years 7 and 8 are above that typically expected of pupils at a similar stage and shows an improvement since the last inspection. They are able to develop practical skills that concentrate upon the use of shape, form, line and colour to create designs and make, for example, masks in card or clay. Their knowledge and understanding of the visual elements and how these can be used to express their own ideas in a range of media using different techniques is now good and well practised. This is enhanced through the reference to and inspiration taken from, the work of other artists including art work from Africa and Asia. This includes information accessed via the computer from websites and galleries. Pupils are encouraged to develop their ideas and to make visual records, including experiments with combinations of different media or unfamiliar techniques and to annotate these in their own words. This is now a regular feature in all projects. As a consequence

the impact upon standards and progress is good. Pupils with special educational needs and those of ethnic minorities and Traveller children make equally good progress. The improved teaching and learning has had more limited impact on standards in Year 9 and standards remain broadly in line with the average for pupils of a similar age.

- 159 Standards overall in Year 11 are well above the national average indicating that the previously high level of achievement will continue. There is significant evidence from the coursework and sketchbooks that pupils have developed an understanding of the notion of exploring ideas in the work of other artists or other cultures. They are able to use this increased knowledge and greater understanding to create personal and often imaginative responses. They do not rely upon the use of secondary sources and much more emphasis is on studying from first hand observation. The use of information and communication technology to manipulate images and to access information from the Internet is well used by pupils in both Years 10 and 11. The acquisition and application of painting, drawing and ceramic skills and techniques remain a priority in teaching and learning. They are well rehearsed, of a high quality and used effectively to produce detailed, accurate studies from a range of visual stimuli such as the figure, plant forms or every day objects. In Year 10 pupils have responded particularly well to this approach and are attaining standards that are better than expected.
- 160 Standards in the Sixth Form are now higher than they were at the last inspection and have been consistently higher for the past three years. Students are able to build upon the secure foundation of art and design established by the end of Key Stage 4. They show a good understanding of the work of other artists and the ability to research and investigate the different ideas and approaches to be found. They are articulate and self assured when discussing their work. They have the confidence to explore a range of ideas, to experiment with different media and to try unusual techniques in order to create imaginative and interesting personal responses. Their progress is good and their work is of a high standard.
- 161 The quality of teaching is now mainly very good or excellent and in lessons seen was never less than good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject. This is employed with clarity and much enthusiasm in order to explain methods, techniques and the ideas to be found in the work of other artists. Planning is very thorough and detailed. Teachers' expectations of pupils are clear, intelligible and targeted at the full range of abilities. Teachers are very good at presenting new approaches and tasks. The use of examples of the work of other pupils, students' work from local colleges, the local university and the work of other artists to illustrate, to inspire and sometimes to guide pupils is very effective. On-going feedback about progress and ways to improve work is a regular feature in all lessons and is welcomed by pupils and students. Lessons are delivered at a good pace and so lesson time is well used and productive. Control and management of pupils are very good. This is done in a positive but authoritative manner that motivates and encourages and is very effective. Homework is a regular feature. It supports studio work, it is interesting, well focused and imaginative. For example, for homework pupils in Year 8 were given the task of illustrating aspects of a letter from Van Gogh to his brother Theo. This required pupils to create a series of small illustrations as well as to write and illustrate a letter of their own expressing similar feelings and descriptions.

- 162 The quality of learning is very good and is a further improvement since the last inspection. Teachers ensure that pupils and students are able to develop well rehearsed practical skills and apply these to their studies with confidence and flair. Pupils and students are aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve their work. This is achieved through regular but well focused dialogue with their teachers and through development targets that are set on a termly basis following teachers' assessment of pupils' work. Pupils enter the school with a wide variety of experiences and levels of attainment in art and design that are often below expectations for their age. However, the high quality of the teaching and detailed planning in art and design enables pupils and students, including those of ethnic minorities, to make good progress and achieve very high standards at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form.
- 163 Attitudes are very good or excellent in all years including in the Sixth Form. The majority of pupils and all students exhibit a high level of maturity, responsibility and seriousness in their work habits and behaviour in art and design. For example, some Year 8 pupils organised themselves and their materials and started working on their painting and drawing tasks despite the unavoidably late arrival of their teacher. Pupils at Key Stage 4 and students in the Sixth Form exhibit similar attitudes and willingness to start work as soon as they enter the studios. They can concentrate well, work hard and are very attentive when required to be so. They enjoy their time in art and design and look forward to being able to express themselves and respond very well to the opportunities to work independently and be creative. They feel that their work is valued and greatly appreciate having their art on show. This speaks volumes about the positive attitudes and expectations that have been well established and is an excellent testimony to the high expectations in art and design.
- 164 The leadership and management in art and design are very good. The extra responsibility as the head of Year 9 does not detract or diminish the head of department's enthusiasm and very serious commitment to the subject or to the pupils and students studying art and design. The quality of both formal and informal monitoring of the teaching and learning and the consequent support and guidance are good. This process is very effective and ensures consistency across the department. The head of department has clear expectations of standards, attainment and the impact that art and design has upon the pupils' learning and achievement. This is effectively communicated to other teachers of art and design. The subject has benefited from such clear direction. Consequently the issues raised from the last inspection have been very well met and the department has gone from strength to strength.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 165 Overall, standards of attainment in design and technology are satisfactory. Although formal assessments do not take place at the end of Key Stage 3, a review of pupils' current work indicates that pupils are attaining standards typical of those normally found. In 2000 GCSE examinations, results were below national and local averages for the proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades A*-C. At A*-G all pupils gained a grade, reflecting the ability range of the pupils.

- 166 At Key Stage 3 most pupils show a basic understanding of the design process and the skills needed to develop useful and effective products. Design and make tasks cover a range of materials within the specific subject areas. The lack of opportunity for textiles study in Key Stage 3 creates a weakness and imbalance in pupils' initial design and make experiences. There is much evidence of collaborative and co-operative working between pupils and well organised small group activities. Pupils are encouraged and supported in analysing and developing their tasks and in the best examples pupils make reference to previous learning in the interpretation of their work. A significant minority of pupils are not always sure how to express a range of ideas and to make judgements about them resulting in insufficient detail when illustrating the links between initial ideas and their development into manufactured outcomes. Pupils make use of relevant technical terminology and show developing numerical and problem solving skills. They make some useful attempts at evaluation although objectivity in their comments and reference to original intents from their specification needs to be extended.
- 167 Spelling and expression within design folder work needs improvement and there is variation in graphical outcomes from high quality to very limited and unstructured work. The variable areas are in linework, inappropriate use of colour and presentation of ideas. Pupils gain some simple control experiences within their electronics study and have a brief introduction to computer assisted drawing and manufacturing skills. The limited information and communication technology equipment available to the department restricts developments in this area and prohibits opportunities for further computer applications to be utilised in design and make activities. There is some basic information and communication technology work undertaken at individual levels. Where it is present, it is of good quality and enhances pupils' work.
- 168 Standards of achievement in Key Stage 4 are satisfactory overall, with some developing good work in Year 10. Most pupils respond well to the tasks set and undertake work of an individual nature. Where there are examples of good work pupils are able to demonstrate sensible, detailed and relevant research with a planned and effective development of suitable designs. There is neat and well presented design folder work, with accurate, structured, well presented notes and sketches, including evaluative comment. Pupils undertake some experimental modelling and identify modifications to ideas. Practical outcomes are mostly complete and operational with some attention given to accuracy and final finish.
- 169 However, a significant proportion of pupils are uncertain and superficial in their approach to making decisions about their work and are reluctant to co-operate fully in design and make situations. They have difficulty in handling the personal planning, management of information and practical activities that are required in developing examination project work. As a consequence standards in both designing and making are undermined by a lack of organisation and structure in the content, planning, and realisation of their ideas. As in Key Stage 3, pupils have limited opportunities to apply information and communication technology skills within their work.
- 170 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teaching is mostly good in Key Stage 3 and broadly satisfactory at Key Stage 4. All the teaching observed by inspectors was judged to

be satisfactory or good. Teachers plan effective lessons using their secure subject knowledge to address the design and make process. Lessons are delivered generally at a brisk pace and this enables pupils to make progress. Pupils are well managed to ensure safe working and most lessons involve practical activity and a variety of tasks. There has been some progress since the last inspection with improvements in the quality of teaching, although there has been more limited development in the use of information and communication technology. Where teaching has weaknesses teachers' support for individual pupils is less effective and teachers' expectations of written work are too low.

171 In both key stages the majority of pupils enjoy their work in the department, they are respectful of health and safety requirements and their working practices reflect appropriate and safe use of tools and machines. Teaching is well prepared and there is much support for individual pupils with helpful comments and praise for achievement.

172 Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

GEOGRAPHY

173 This department has been ineffective in the past, but is currently improving.

174 During the course of the inspection, evidence was gathered through observing ten lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with senior staff and subject teachers.

175 In Key Stage 3, the standard of work seen shows that pupils' work is rather below national expectations, especially in Year 9. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in recent years show attainment close to national averages, however, the evidence on which these judgements were made was unreliable. Many pupils enter the school with a limited range of experiences of geography; they make satisfactory or better progress, especially in Years 7 and 8. Pupils make good use of opportunities to conduct structured enquiries, although the more demanding skills of analysis and independent investigation are underdeveloped. Pupils can describe and begin to explain geographical patterns and processes, although their ability to explain is below expectations, especially in Year 9. The development of pupils' geographical skills as they move through the school is at best satisfactory. This relative weakness results in part from these skills not being systematically taught as a means of investigating places and themes.

176 Pupils' attainment at GCSE in the last three years has been significantly below national averages. Girls have outperformed boys at higher grades, in line with the national pattern; however, overall there has been marked underachievement in relation to other subjects in the school. Few pupils choose to study geography and there is no Year 11 geography group. In work seen in Year 10 during the inspection, however, the attainment of most pupils was consistent with national standards for this age group.

177 In both Key Stage 3 and GCSE lessons, the quality of teaching is good overall, and at times very good. It has improved since the last inspection. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives, expectations and outcomes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and

explain geographical patterns and processes well. They make a crisp start to their lessons, often make good use of time and intervene to move pupils on in their learning. Pupils have a clear idea about what they are learning and often are helped to reflect on their progress at the end of lessons. In some lessons, carefully selected resources help pupils to develop their knowledge of places and geographical themes, especially where good questions challenge pupils to explain their understanding. In GCSE classes, teachers quickly identify individual pupils' misconceptions and redirect or reinforce their learning. Pupils are usually well managed and work well, responding with interest and at times enthusiasm to the teaching.

- 178 Clearly structured activities, resources and the effective use of classroom assistants support the attainment and progress of average and less able pupils. More able pupils seldom make more than satisfactory progress. Where they do so, it is as a result of opportunities to extend their learning, for example through probing questioning, open-ended and investigative tasks. Pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding is enhanced by teachers' emphasis on geographical language and they are encouraged to write for a variety of purposes. However, in Key Stage 3 there are few opportunities for extended writing, or for pupils to clarify their thinking by engaging in discussion. Numeracy skills have not yet been systematically developed. In GCSE classes, some imaginative activities encourage pupils to make decisions and to think about geographical patterns and processes in more depth.
- 179 In a minority of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory. These lessons have objectives which are unclear and are not communicated effectively to pupils, whilst planning does not support a clear sequence to learning. A lack of visual or reference resources such as atlases means that pupils are not engaged in their work, given a starting point for their learning or enabled to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. Lack of guidance about the quality expected, leads at times to a poor standard of work. Those few occasions where pupils lose concentration are where they are given undemanding or over-structured work.
- 180 Pupils' learning is supported by good practice in marking their work, making it clear what they need to do to improve. However, this is inconsistent within the department. Pupils are supported in periodically identifying targets for improvement, although they are often unclear about which aspects of geography they need to focus on next.
- 181 There is no current head of geography; however the senior management has given significant support in helping to rebuild the department. A programme of monitoring and evaluation has focused on improving teaching, whilst data is effectively deployed to help teachers decide on the pitch of individual lessons. There is no current development plan for geography, or means of reflecting on the strengths or weaknesses of the long-term plan. Pupils value the insight geography gives into other people's cultures and ways of life, and the department's teaching of social and moral issues contributes to the school's aims and mission statement. However, opportunities to consider these aspects in depth, and opportunities for pupils to co-operate with each other in their work are currently under-developed.
- 182 The department has adequate resources for much of its work; additional funds have been effectively used to improve resources and the classroom environment. However, limited library resources and Internet access offer weak support for the development of pupils'

research skills. The department is unable to meet National Curriculum requirements to teach information and communication technology because it has limited access to computers and other equipment.

HISTORY

- 183 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, as shown by the National Curriculum teachers' assessments, is below the national average for pupils of a similar age. In 2000, only 42% of pupils attained Level 5 or above, compared to national figures of 60 per cent. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards being reached by pupils are again below the average, with 44% obtaining A*-C grades compared to 57% nationally. Attainment is higher by girls than boys, with 63% at grades A*-C. In terms of A*-G grades, the subject achieved just above the national average. Over the last few years, there has been some inconsistency in GCSE results. Only very small numbers of students have studied for GCE A-level in the Sixth Form. Their attainment has consistently been around or above the national average, including 100% success by the last group of entrants. Pupils presently in Key Stage 3 entered the school with well below average attainment and are achieving well to attain standards close to those expected nationally. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form, achievement overall is good when compared with the standards achieved at the beginning of Key Stage 4 and Year 12 respectively.
- 184 The quality of work seen in lessons and pupils' current standard of work in Key Stage 3 indicate attainment levels at least comparable with past teacher assessments and in some cases higher. Pupils' achievement results in good historical knowledge and understanding, and their work shows that they have a good sense of chronological order and are developing essential historical skills, such as the interpretation of evidence, the appreciation of bias and the roles of personalities. Source materials are consistently and effectively utilised. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson on Nazi Germany, pupils used their good understanding of the events behind the rise of Fascism to make judgements about Hitler's elimination of opponents and his increasing hold on power. Pupils with higher levels of attainment demonstrate developing skills of interpretation and empathy. By the time pupils reach Key Stage 4, they show in some topics a mature grasp of issues and an ability to evaluate conflicting evidence. However, as in Key Stage 3, there is too much variation in their confidence and willingness to make presentations and to contribute to class discussions. While responses to teachers' questioning can at times be very good, they often show a degree of reluctance to participate. In the Sixth Form, in the one lesson observed during the inspection, there was sound knowledge and understanding in a Year 13 presentation on Nazi policy towards German culture.
- 185 Contributions made in lessons show empathy with people of different cultures and eras, as in Year 7 discussions of life in medieval towns and villages. A further example was a Year 8 examination of loyalties before the outbreak of the English Civil War. Note-taking and short answer writing develops well for the majority of pupils, though there is a lack of extended narrative writing.
- 186 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They are helped by the

good learning ethos in lessons and by the approach to work of their peers. The support of classroom assistants helps them to acquire the essential information within new units of work and to improve their understanding of specific issues.

- 187 Pupils' levels of concentration, together with very good behaviour in lessons, promote individual development and achievement. Achievement is also consistently promoted by the very good quality of teaching. During the inspection, teaching was judged to be good or better in all but one lesson, where it was satisfactory. In ten of the fourteen lessons seen it was very good, and in two it was excellent.
- 188 Overall, the quality of teaching in history is very good. The very effective teaching develops historical skills and especially that of source analysis. Learning is consolidated, and in most lessons there is a very good pace of working. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their ability to judge situations and actions, and to work towards establishing their own attitudes and opinions on evidence from varied source materials. This approach was seen to be followed throughout a Year 11 lesson on Vietnam post-1939. There are, however, some lessons where teachers over-direct learning so reducing opportunities for both class and independent learning by pupils. More opportunities for pair and group work, leading to higher levels of discussion and debate occurred in the best lessons. Teachers make only a limited use of information and communication technology to enable pupils to research information to support unit and course work. The opportunities for field work, although limited, have a positive impact on developing pupils' interests and skills in both key stages. Pupils acquire effective understanding of the topics being studied as a result of the skilful sharing of the teachers' very good subject knowledge and interest. Detailed planning and lesson structures, together with clear learning objectives ensure an established focus in lessons. For example, pupils in a Year 9 lesson on the outbreak of the First World War were helped to develop a perceptive understanding of the differences between expectations and reality during 1914-16.
- 189 Pupils' progress is monitored effectively through the regular marking of their work, often with extended comments for further improvement. Procedures for target-setting and for self-assessment by pupils are under-developed.
- 190 The quality of teaching in the history department and the achievement of pupils benefit from the good leadership and management provided by the subject leader. Planning and teaching strategies are regularly assessed and reviewed. There is a firm commitment to raising standards and one example of this is the recent introduction of homework source booklets for Key Stage 3 pupils. The teaching environment is attractive and well maintained. Good progress has been made since the last inspection on the aspects of planning and teaching identified as needing attention. There was evidence during this inspection that increased challenge in Key Stage 3 is leading to raised teacher expectations. However, the subject would benefit further from more developed target-setting and progress tracking procedures, an extension of information and communication technology opportunities in each key stage, and a raising of the levels of pupils' interaction and debate.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 191 The school is not offering a satisfactory quality of education or meeting statutory curriculum requirements in this subject for pupils in the first three years of secondary education or for those older pupils not undertaking an accredited course in the subject.
- 192 In assessments at the age of 14 in 2000, teachers assessed their pupils as working at a level in line with national standards. This was not reflected in work seen during the inspection which was judged to be below the standard expected. Little recognition is given to pupils' prior attainment on entry to the school. Teachers' planning of lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 is more concerned with task completion than reaching required standards and does not take into account pupils' previous achievements. This is to some extent the result of limited time in lessons but largely a result of inadequate planning at departmental level. Pupils develop specific software skills but have little opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply these skills or to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- 193 Lessons are based around a series of modules that seek to encourage pupils to use different software packages and to develop work using them. Pupils in Year 7 can log onto the school network, retrieve and print or save files without difficulty. In lessons observed they were acquiring basic software skills using databases and could manipulate the software with some confidence. Few pupils could explain the uses of a database or their key functions and pupils were not required to record their learning in exercise books or folders.
- 194 Some more able pupils knew much more about the software than they were allowed to demonstrate in lessons thus restricting their progress significantly. The lack of classroom documentation e.g. information sheets, key word lists, help sheets etc hinders pupils' understanding and limits the ability of pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils with special educational needs have no additional support other than that which can be provided by the teacher.
- 195 Almost identical activities were observed taking place in Years 8 and 9 with little opportunity for pupils to show how their skills, knowledge and understanding had developed. No use was made of large databases to examine their function, value and limitations even though these are available on the school Intranet. Pupils are unable to access Internet databases such as search engines etc. as Internet access is currently only available to these pupils on a single machine in the school library.
- 196 Standards at Key Stage 4 are more secure for those pupils taking accredited courses as a result of the clear framework provided by the syllabus and assessment processes. This is not the case for other pupils whose exposure to information and communication technology through their work in other subjects is neither recorded or assessed. Pupils following GCSE courses are well supported and are making good progress. This is an improvement on the previous inspection where Key Stage 4 information and communication technology was a weakness.
- 197 In Year 10 pupils can study GCSE or GNVQ courses. In work seen during the inspection, attainment by the age of 16 was below average. Pupils studying for GCSE now in Year 11 experienced considerable disruption to their studies in Year 10 and work is now focused on

addressing their immediate needs prior to the imminent examinations. Standards of their work now appear to be in line with those typically found.

- 198 The adoption of the GNVQ information and communication technology course in September 2000 further extended provision for pupils at Key Stage 4. Of the group following this course more able students take Intermediate Level GNVQ while the majority take the subject at Foundation Level. Recent module results would suggest that pupils on these courses are progressing well in the subject. They are attaining standards which are frequently above course expectations. Pupils of all abilities make progress in these formal courses although the lack of adequate support materials for the subject does limit opportunities for pupils to work independently.
- 199 The use of information and communication technology in the other subjects of the curriculum has not been monitored within the school. Therefore there are only weak links between what takes place in information and communication technology lessons and the use of information and communication technology skills elsewhere within the curriculum. It is used effectively in art and design where Year 10 and 11 pupils were observed using software to manipulate digital images. The art and design department has also secured its own Internet connection and Key Stage 3 pupils were observed using web resources to augment their research for homework. The same facility was also observed being used by Sixth Form students. Effective use of computers was also observed in lessons in modern foreign languages and by pupils before and after school in the library. This patchy delivery means that not all pupils are receiving their entitlement to information and communication technology in each subject and as a result the school is in breach of statutory requirements.
- 200 Pupils' attitudes to the subject and to their work are generally good although some challenging behaviour was observed during lessons. Most pupils apply themselves to their work and take pride when they are praised for their achievements. They support each other and relationships in classrooms are generally positive. Sixth Form students work well and take their studies seriously.
- 201 Overall the quality of teaching seen was satisfactory in the individual lessons seen. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is largely undertaken by newly qualified teachers whose main subject is not information and communication technology. Teaching at Key Stage 3 was, on balance, satisfactory but hampered by the lack of subject knowledge or suitable guidance on what should be taught in order for pupils to meet the required standards. There is a lack of detailed short-term planning linking classroom activity to national requirements limits the longer term effectiveness of teaching. Learning objectives are not shared sufficiently with pupils and lessons are not structured to meet the varying needs of different groups of pupils.
- 202 Teaching in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory overall with a third of those lessons seen being judged good or very good. Teachers use the provided external course materials to plan effective lessons enabling pupils to make frequently good progress. Lessons are effectively prepared with a range of activities and in the best lessons work is very well matched to pupils' learning needs.

- 203 There are many aspects of management and leadership of the subject that are unsatisfactory as information and communication technology is a subject within the information and communication technology and business education department. The non-compliance with statutory requirements, the poor support for inexperienced teachers, the lack of long-term monitoring of classroom teaching and the poor progress of different groups of pupils have resulted in poor delivery of the subject.
- 204 There has been improvement at Key Stage 4 information and communication technology since the last inspection in the range and extent of information and communication technology provision. There remain weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject in securing higher standards through better strategic planning; improvements in the structure and delivery of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the provision of suitable training and support to classroom teachers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 205 This is an effective department in which the great majority of pupils make good progress.
- 206 Standards at the age of 14 are below the national average. In 2000 49% of pupils gained Level 4 or above in teacher assessments compared with the national average of 64%. No pupil gained Level 6.
- 207 Standards in GCSE examinations are below the national average. In 2000 39.5% of pupils gained grades A*-C compared with the national average of 46.1%. 99.1% of pupils gained A*-G compared with the national average of 98.6%. Pupils' low prior attainment is one reason for these below-average results. Another is that the school enters a much higher proportion of the year group for the examination than schools nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C in modern foreign languages is well above the school average for all subjects. Pupils achieve well in relation to other subjects in the school. In past years results have varied in relation to pupils' prior attainment but have been consistently above the school average. The standards of work seen in Year 11 suggest that results for 2001 will be closer to the national average.
- 208 The number of pupils entered for A-level in 2000 was small and results were broadly in line with expectations, given pupils' earlier attainments.
- 209 The majority of pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. In Year 7, where standards are in line with national averages, pupils have made good progress, particularly in the development of speaking and listening skills. This is because teachers use the target language to communicate with pupils and are beginning to insist that pupils use it to communicate with them. In Years 8 and 9, where prior attainment is lower, pupils are making significant, if less spectacular progress. Pupils with special educational needs are making a good contribution to oral work but their progress is limited because they are not being adequately supported in their written work.
- 210 In Years 10 and 11 pupils are making good progress. A significant number of pupils are

achieving beyond their predicted GCSE grades and pupils are developing the ability to produce accurate pieces of extended writing. Pupils in Year 11, whose attainment was slightly below the national average at the age of 14 are producing work that is generally above average for GCSE.

- 211 In the Sixth Form all students make good progress, especially those who gained lower grades at GCSE. All students are able to discuss issues using the target language and to understand complex texts with the support of the teacher.
- 212 Teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 3 it is good overall with some very good teaching but also some that is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form it is good overall with some very good teaching. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- 213 Teachers have good subject knowledge. All teachers are confident in the use of the target language for the subjects they teach and use it extensively as a means of communication in the classroom. Pupils, as a result, are developing good listening skills. The use of the target language by pupils is increasing.
- 214 Good lesson-planning is a feature of all lessons seen. All teachers appreciate the need to build on a solid base of vocabulary and structures. They practise first with the receptive skills of listening and reading before moving on to the active skills of speaking and writing.
- 215 Homework is nearly always well used to build on work done in the lesson. In one Year 8 class, for example, homework was used to consolidate the new vocabulary learnt in the lesson with extension work for the more able. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- 216 The department makes good use of information technology. Word-processing is widely used to draft and re-draft written work. Interactive packages like *Unterwegs* and *Fun With Texts* are increasingly used in lessons.
- 217 In nearly all lessons seen the relationship between pupils and teachers was good. Pupils respond well to teachers whose lessons have pace, challenge and variety and where they are actively involved in the lesson. In one Year 7 class, in which pupils were expected to learn a lot of new structures, the lesson was conducted at pace so that pupils had to concentrate hard to keep up. New vocabulary was practised using a series of games, played in groups and pairs and controlled by the pupils. Pupils responded with enthusiasm and all made good gains in knowledge of vocabulary. Pupils respond passively to those lessons which are dominated by the teacher and progress in these lessons is less clear. In the minority of lessons in which the teacher does not insist on good standards of behaviour pupils are inattentive rather than disruptive but little learning takes place.
- 218 In Years 10 and 11 expectations of pupils are high. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored so that teachers are constantly aware of pupils' level of attainment and can set further

challenges to encourage pupils to improve. As a result many pupils are exceeding their original estimated grades.

- 219 Teachers and pupils are less clear about the progress being made by pupils at Key Stage 3. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils but are usually expressed in terms of what the teacher is going to teach rather than what pupils are going to learn. Review of progress at the end of the lesson is not yet routine for all teachers. Regular opportunities for assessing National Curriculum levels are not identified in schemes of work. Pupils' profile sheets do not identify progress in terms of National Curriculum levels and pupils find it difficult to identify the level at which they are working. Targets for pupils are not specific enough to help them improve their performance. Pupils' exercise books contain a lot of encouraging comments but very few that identify their strengths and weaknesses and show them what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. In Year 8, in particular, the needs of the most and least able in mixed ability classes need to be addressed. The teaching of reading skills needs to be further developed.
- 220 The department is very well managed. High standards are promoted, particularly at Key Stage 4, by thorough tracking of pupils' progress and a detailed analysis of examination results. The monitoring of the department's performance, particularly the quality of teaching, is effective. Individuals' strengths and weaknesses have been correctly identified and appropriate training opportunities have been made available. The head of department has a clear vision of how the department should develop. There has been a clear analysis of progress since the last inspection and future priorities have been identified in the departmental development plan.
- 221 Display is good and the department produces an impressive range of support material for their course books.
- 222 Staffing is adequate. The department is supported by foreign language assistants in French and German. Only two of the four teachers are dual linguists and this greatly limits flexibility.

MUSIC

- 223 This is a good music department with many strengths and no areas of major weakness.
- 224 At the age of 14 pupils are assessed to be working at a standard in line with that expected of pupils of the same age nationally. This was reflected in the work seen during the inspection. In recent GCSE examinations the number of pupils achieving grades in the range A*-C was broadly in line with national averages. The numbers of pupils achieving within this range has increased from 1999 to 2000. A small number of pupils were entered for the A-level examination in music in 2000 and all were successful.
- 225 In work seen during the inspection, pupils aged 14 were achieving standards broadly in line with national expectations as a result of the department's good planning and management of the teaching and learning of basic practical skills in music for all pupils. For example, all

pupils have regular and frequent opportunities to develop their practical skills in performing on three instruments, the keyboard, the drum kit and the guitar. The concentration on the development of practical skills allows pupils in Year 7 to make good progress in performance activities and also allows better access to the other aspects of the subject throughout Years 7, 8 and 9. The further inclusion of short periods of whole class teaching in the practical sessions allows the ideas discussed with individuals or small groups to be shared by all, helping pupils to make even better progress.

- 226 By the end of Year 9 pupils are able to progress to further musical study with greater confidence in their practical abilities as a result of the well organised learning opportunities. Pupils enjoy working with the organisation of sound which they do with enthusiasm. Relationships between pupils and between teacher and pupil are very good. This is a contributing factor in the good progress that pupils make.
- 227 Pupils make good progress by the end of Year 11 so that attainment is broadly in line with national averages. Pupils studying GCSE make good use of the resources of the department including the use of information and communication technology to develop their musical ideas. The work of pupils who achieve the highest grades is supported by the very good service provided by the local education authority's music service. Examples of work were seen during the inspection, in instrumental lessons, in performance in classes, in extra-curricular work and on video and cassette tape. This showed that all pupils are making good progress and that the most able have the opportunity to work at the highest level with very good support from a high quality team.
- 228 Standards seen in the Sixth Form are above average. Students make good use of information and communication technology equipment to prepare and present their compositions, making use of appropriate musical software to develop their musical themes in a variety of genre. The standard of instrumental performance is high which contributes to good examination results and also enables pupils to provide good role models for younger pupils as they give their skilled support in ensembles and in school events as soloists.
- 229 Overall the quality of teaching seen was good. It was never less than satisfactory and often good and very good. Lessons are planned well to provide an opportunity for pupils of all abilities to be challenged. The pace of lessons is good and the limited time available in Years 7, 8 and 9 is well used. The good subject knowledge of both teachers and the support staff is a significant feature of the department allowing pupils of all levels of ability the opportunity to make good progress over a wide range of activities.
- 230 The good progress made by pupils is due in part to the very good management of the teaching and learning and also to the way that skills are taught in a progressive way with clearly identified criteria for success. Pupils know what they can do and know what they need to do to make progress.
- 231 Learning is good for pupils in all ability groups and at all ages because the work of the department is well planned and aims to develop the skills of all pupils sequentially. There is an emphasis on independent learning in skills sessions for pupils. They practise the performance of music either on their own or in small groups where they work co-

operatively, and a regular feature of this approach is the sharing of performances. Self and group appraisal allows for positive criticism to support the development of this work. This effective foundation allows pupils to have genuine access to the GCSE music course and also provides pupils who do not choose to study music after the age of 14 with experiences of high value. The regular use of informal and formal assessments coupled with the sharing of practical creative work contributes to the impact of the learning experience.

- 232 An important feature of the work of the department is the availability of high quality instrumental learning opportunities, at no cost to parents, beyond those available through lessons. Pupils are encouraged to learn to play a brass, woodwind or stringed instrument, which is supplied by the school or local authority. Those who learn to play instruments make good progress under the experienced and skilled guidance of the local education authority's music service. The school is well served by this team. Pupils who are learning orchestral instruments have the opportunity to perform in ensembles in an extracurricular timetable when they reach an appropriate standard. The commitment of pupils to instrumental performance is high. The ensemble programme does not yet include those who are learning to play keyboards, guitar and drum kit in general curriculum music lessons.
- 233 Vocal music is not as strong as instrumental opportunities in both extracurricular work and the mainstream music curriculum. Opportunities for pupils in this area are under-developed.
- 234 Extended curricular opportunities are a feature of the school. Professional musicians working with the staff of the music department provide an additional dimension and bring young people in direct contact with live music of a high standard. Recent workshops have included music from South America performed by Caliche and also given access to the musicians from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Links with the partner primary schools have been further strengthened with joint musical performance projects, for example 'The Pied Piper' project, again led by professional musicians in partnership with teaching staff.
- 235 Attitudes to music are good in all years and very good in the Sixth Form. Examples of good support for ensemble work is evident and more experienced pupils take advantage of ensemble opportunities offered by the local education authority, performing in the Wolverhampton Youth Orchestra and Wolverhampton Wind Orchestra. The support for pupils is strong and pupils learn that it is acceptable to work together in teams of different ages, each giving their best efforts to support each other.
- 236 The department enjoys spacious accommodation which is used to its fullest extent. Display is good and allows pupils the opportunity to be informed about the department, for example, the organisation of the music curriculum and extracurricular opportunities. In general the department is satisfactorily equipped for most of its work however it has yet to fully develop the potential of information and communication technology for Key Stage 3.
- 237 The department is very well led despite the pressure on the head of department of additional responsibilities as a head of year and significant involvement in the expressive arts option course. Documentation is detailed and very thorough. Departmental staff, support staff and

visiting teachers all work together with a clear sense of purpose in a very warm and friendly atmosphere. Team members are all genuinely supportive of pupils and give their time freely allowing very good opportunities for all, including ensemble performance opportunities locally and abroad.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 238 Overall standards of attainment in physical education are at least in line with national expectations in Key Stage 3 and broadly in line in Key Stage 4. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages. Pupils are competing successfully in a wide range of inter-school activities with some individuals achieving significant success. The wide range of extracurricular activities, including clubs, extends opportunities and contributes to raising pupils' attainment.
- 239 Lesson observations confirm that the majority of pupils are attaining appropriately with some demonstrating very high levels of individual skills. Overall, pupils demonstrate sound knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of activities. For example, in Year 7 pupils learn basic basketball, racket and hockey skills, including essential rules, codes of practice and safety in a range of skill practices and small games. In Year 8 pupils build on these skills to develop other skills and knowledge in table tennis, badminton and netball. By the end of Key Stage 3, Year 9 pupils are able design their own fitness circuits and understand how these can be used to develop strength, endurance and flexibility. In Key Stage 4, Year 10 pupils learn communicating and leadership skills in an accredited course leading to the Junior Sports Leadership Award. In a very challenging lesson they analysed and discussed a video recording of their performance as participants and leaders. Another, small group of pupils, were observed working independently and collaboratively to refine a dance routine which they had choreographed.
- 240 Since the last inspection GCSE and A-level courses have been introduced. Results have been consistently high. In 2000, 72% of the 25 pupils entered for GCSE physical education achieved passes at A*-C grade. This is significantly higher than the national average for the subject. All the pupils entered passed the examination. Boys did better than girls. The results compare very favourable with results in other subjects. The number of pupils entering for GCSE is increasing and challenging targets are set for the next two years. A group of Year 10 GCSE pupils were observed extending their knowledge of individual and team plays and strategies in attack and defence in basketball. In the same lesson pupils learn to officiate. Although few students opt to take A-level courses, students entered for the examination have all achieved C or D grades. In the Sixth Form, students in an A-level class learned to identify the interaction between muscles and joints in sports activities, using a skeleton and demonstration video, in a lesson demanding considerable concentration to understand difficult concepts and technical vocabulary.
- 241 The overall quality of teaching is good. Some very good and excellent teaching was also observed. Lesson planning and organisation are detailed, providing structure and progression in learning for all pupils. Many elements contribute to pupils being able to understand and develop their work. These include effective class management, the use of

shared learning objectives, clear explanations and demonstrations and differentiated activities and equipment. The best lessons provide well-planned opportunities for observation, analysis and discussion by pupils. Staff are confident and assured, with secure subject knowledge.

- 242 Pupils respond well to this purposeful and supportive approach. They are very well dressed. The great majority of pupils are very positive, pay attention and with few exceptions work with energy, determination and enthusiasm to meet tasks and challenges. Consequently relationships and behaviour are very good. This contributes to pupils' good progress within the subject and to their social and personal development.
- 243 The recently re-organised department is effectively led and managed. Department meetings are held regularly. Documentation is excellent. Regular monitoring of teaching takes place and manageable assessment and targeting processes are firmly established. Comparative data is analysed and used to set challenging targets. Relationships within the department are very good. The balance of experienced and recently appointed staff makes an effective team. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Staff support each other, work hard and contribute significantly to the ethos, work and life of the school. Displays in the department are of high quality. The department is well placed to move forward and has identified further developments.
- 244 The governors, school and department have responded positively to the last inspection. Attainment is higher overall, with good examination results. The balance of the curriculum has improved significantly with more time, accredited courses, revised schemes of work and increased use of information and communication technology. Teaching styles are now appropriately varied within practical activities and assessment and targeting processes supports pupils' progress. Pupils now have more opportunities for collaborative activities, independent learning and responsibility. Participation rates have increased and the range of extracurricular activities extended. Governors have funded extensions to changing rooms and a physical education office is established. The department was awarded the prestigious 'Sportsmark Award' in 2000.