

INSPECTION REPORT

ST BERNARD'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Rotherham

Rotherham LEA

Unique reference number: 106963

Headteacher: Mrs E Newton

Reporting inspector: Mr P Mitchell
002467

Dates of inspection: 6th February 2001 – 8th February 2001

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Herringthorpe Valley Road Rotherham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M A Bartholomew
Date of previous inspection:	29.04.1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Bernard's Catholic High School is a relatively small, voluntary aided, comprehensive school with 660 pupils, aged 11-16, on roll (320 boys, 340 girls). The school has a Catholic/Christian ethos and the work of the school reflects in its mission statement. The school draws its pupils from a large area covering the southern half of the Rotherham Metropolitan area, which includes some areas of significant social and economic disadvantage. Some pupils travel long distances to the school. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is close to that found nationally. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs (13.3 per cent) is slightly below the percentage found nationally. About one per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very close to the national average. The school is involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Bernard's Catholic High School is a good school with some excellent features. Standards at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) have risen at a faster rate than in schools nationally. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Very effective leadership of the school has brought about significant improvements in recent years. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching, which is often good or better and never less than satisfactory, leads to overall standards in tests and examinations at ages 14 and 16 that are high in relation to national averages and those of similar schools¹.
- Pupils behave very well and are committed to their school and to their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The excellent quality of care, support and guidance for pupils enables them to thrive both academically and socially.
- The school uses data well to measure performance and to set targets for improvement.
- The governors are very supportive of the school; they are well informed and are taking an increasingly active role in the life of the school.

What could be improved

- There is a lack of consistency in the way that teaching is monitored and evaluated.
- Some class teaching takes insufficient account of the needs of gifted and talented pupils and of the contents of individual education plans for those pupils with special educational needs.

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 1996. The school has improved considerably since that date. Standards in external tests and examinations have risen. There has been an improvement in the percentage of teaching judged to be very good or excellent and, unlike the previous inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

Attendance has improved considerably. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes have been sustained. The inclusive nature of the school has also been sustained and exclusions have remained at a low level. The school has addressed most of the key issues from the previous report although work remains to be done on lesson planning. Particularly good progress has been made in making improvements to accommodation and further improvements are planned.

¹ Similar schools are schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average points scores² in GCSE examinations.

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

For the past three years, results in national tests for 14 year-olds in English have been consistently well above national averages. Results in mathematics and science have risen from being close to the national averages in 1998 and 1999 to being above average in 2000. In 2000, mathematics and science results were above the average for similar schools and English was well above the average.

The school's GCSE results for both boys and girls have been consistently above the national average and the average for similar schools. In 1999 the school's results were in the top 5 per cent nationally and in 2000 the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE higher grades (A*-C) was 9.9 per cent above the national average. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than schools nationally. Almost every pupil achieved at least one grade at GCSE. The percentage of boys achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE has risen dramatically from 38 per cent in 1998 to 62 per cent in 2000, when a higher proportion of boys than girls achieved five A*-C grades. The average GCSE points score was well above the national average for boys and above average for girls. In 2000, the proportions of pupils achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in English and science were well above national averages and just above the national average in mathematics. Results in all other subjects were close to or above the national average. In English literature, art and design, information studies and physical education over 75 per cent of pupils achieved GCSE higher grades (A*-C). Well above average results were also achieved in English language, geography and science. The results in these subjects made a major contribution to the school's above average results overall. The school has recognised the need to improve standards further in those subjects, such as modern foreign languages and design and technology, where standards are close to the national average.

The school has used a wide range of information on pupils' previous attainments to set an appropriately challenging target of 67 per cent of pupils achieving five A*-C GCSE grades in 2002. The school recognises that the target set for 2001 of 58 per cent is less ambitious in the light of the 2000 results.

The standard of pupils' work seen during this inspection generally reflects the above average examination results. Work of a particularly high standard was seen in art and music. Pupils have good skills in speaking, listening, reading and numeracy but skills in spelling, punctuation and handwriting across the curriculum are less strong. Pupils generally make good progress and achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. Pupils with special educational needs who are withdrawn from some lessons for additional support make good progress during these sessions. In classes, appropriate provision allows pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in understanding the work covered in lessons. However, in a relatively high proportion of classes there is an insufficient focus on these pupils' individual education plans to allow their specific needs to be met fully.

The school has identified gifted and talented pupils as a part of the national 'Excellence in Cities'

² GCSE points are allocated to grades from A*=8 to G=1. These scores are then totalled and averaged. Average points scores are therefore a measure of the average GCSE grade achieved by pupils.

initiative. Some subjects, such as mathematics, English, geography, physical education, music and information studies provide extension work for gifted and talented pupils allowing them to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, in many lessons no special provision was seen for these pupils. The school has recognised this and provision for these pupils is one element in the School Development (Improvement) Plan.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They value the contribution the school makes to their lives both academically and personally. This has a positive impact on their willingness to learn and their desire to achieve highly. Pupils show a caring attitude to buildings and resources.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are excellent and reflect not only the effectiveness of the school's systems, formal and informal, to promote good behaviour but also the pupils' self-discipline. There are very few exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and pupils respond well to the many opportunities with which they are provided to exercise responsibility.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are good as the school has successfully taken measures to raise and then to maintain above average attendance since the last inspection.

The school's high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the respect that pupils show for each other, and for members of the wider school community, helps pupils to flourish personally and socially.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is a strength of the school. Teaching observed was never less than satisfactory. Fifty-five per cent was good or better and, of this, 16 per cent was very good or excellent. Teachers invariably provide helpful introductions to lessons and give clear explanations, which aid pupils' understanding. Questioning is used very effectively both to check what pupils know and understand and to involve them in the lessons. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and pupils show respect for their teachers. This enables teachers to manage classes in a calm, sensitive way. Pupils are very willing to approach their teachers for help and always receive a supportive response. For example, pupils often stay behind voluntarily at the end of lessons to ask for help or clarification.

The teaching is invariably appropriately targeted at the majority of the pupils in the class, allowing them to make good progress. However, because some subject teachers take insufficient account of the guidance given in the individual education plans, pupils with special educational needs are not helped sufficiently to overcome their specific difficulties. Teaching strategies to address the needs of gifted and talented pupils are developing and some good practice exists within the school. However, as the school has recognised, further work is needed to meet these pupils' needs fully in

all classes.

There is wide variation in the quality of teachers' planning. Some planning is good but where planning is not thorough this is often a major factor in teaching not meeting the needs of all pupils. Most teachers mark work conscientiously but there are some gaps in the marking of pupils' work.

The good behaviour of pupils, their conscientious approach to their work, their willing responses to questions and discussion and their self-motivation are major factors in the good progress they make and the high standards they achieve in many lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements fully and an appropriate amount of time is allocated to each subject at both Key Stages. Currently pupils do not have the opportunity to study vocational courses at Key Stage 4 but this is under development. Provision for numeracy in Years 7 and 8 is very effective in developing pupils' understanding of number work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	When withdrawn from lessons, pupils receive good support from the Support for Learning department, which enables them to make good progress. In most mainstream classes teachers provide appropriate support enabling pupils to make good progress in understanding the subject but some teaching places insufficient emphasis upon the needs highlighted in pupils' individual education plans so that progress in addressing their specific needs is restricted.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Pupils' personal education is a strength of the school. The school's strong Christian ethos impacts positively upon the pupils' moral and social as well as their spiritual development. A wide range of extra-curricular activities reinforces this learning and provides good opportunities for further social, cultural and personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has robust systems in place for ensuring its high standards of care for pupils and the school is an exceptionally orderly environment. Procedures for monitoring academic attainment are satisfactory and are currently being strengthened. Child protection procedures are secure. The school is truly inclusive and has a number of effective strategies to ensure that all pupils receive excellent support and to prevent exclusions. The school has carried out risk assessments and is confident that secure health and safety procedures and practices are in place.

Curricular and extra-curricular provision in art, music, physical education and information studies are very good. The actions that the school is taking under the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative, especially the provision of a well equipped inclusion centre, a City Learning Centre with up-to-date computer facilities, a learning mentor for individual pupils and involvement in Project Rallye, are very effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very effective leadership by the headteacher and leadership team, who have a clear vision for the development of the school, is continuing to raise standards and to promote the Christian ethos. They have also brought about substantial improvements in the school's accommodation and financial position in the last three years. They make very good use of comparative performance information in setting targets for improvement. The monitoring of teaching, particularly by some heads of department, is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that practice is consistently good and complies fully with school policies.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors carry out their statutory duties diligently and are very supportive of the school. They are well informed and are taking an increasingly active role in monitoring the school's performance and in the life of the school generally. Their strategic contribution to the school's financial management and the refurbishment and extension of accommodation has been of particular benefit to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes good use of comparative performance information in identifying its strengths and areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	Financial, human and other resources are used to good effect in the school. The school recognises that further work is needed to bring the library up to the required standard.

The headteacher and senior staff have put in place an appropriate development planning cycle, good systems for evaluating the results of subject departments and mechanisms for monitoring financial and other decisions. They have also improved the physical environment of the school and invested wisely in improving learning resources. The school makes good use of its financial resources. Very impressive improvements to the school's information and communications technology provision have been made through the careful use of specific funding. Value for money is obtained whenever major new initiatives are introduced and the school applies the principles of best value to its work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School's expectations of its pupils. • Children like school. • Children make good progress. • Teaching is good. • School is helping pupils become mature and responsible. • School is easily approachable. • School is well led and managed. • Pupils behave well. • Level of homework is appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how well pupils are progressing. • Closeness of working with parents.

All these positive views were shared by 90 per cent or more parents and the inspection team agrees with these opinions. A small minority of parents (12–14 per cent) felt that improvements were needed in two areas. Within the limits of the time available, inspectors formed the view that the school makes good efforts to work closely with parents. Inspectors' judged that the contents of pupils' annual progress reports meet requirements but recognise that some parents do not find the comments, that are generated from a statement bank, as helpful as they could be.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- **Teaching, which is often good or better and never less than satisfactory, leads to standards in tests and examinations at ages 14 and 16 that are high in relation to national figures and those of similar schools.**
1. The teaching observed was always at least satisfactory and often good or very good. This contributes significantly to the standards pupils attain which, overall, are above national averages in national tests for 14 year-olds and in GCSE examinations. Standards in GCSE examinations have risen at a faster rate than most schools nationally.
 2. The percentage of boys achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE has risen dramatically in recent years from 38 per cent in 1998 to 62 per cent in 2000. The school's programme of in-service training, its implementation by teachers and the insistence by teachers that all pupils produce sufficient work of a high standard, have all contributed to this improvement. The boys' positive attitudes to their work, arising from the work that the school has carried out over the past three years, is also a major factor in enabling them to make good progress in their learning.
 3. Teachers provide good introductions to lessons, which are effective in reminding pupils of the work covered in the previous lessons and in helping them to understand the purpose of the current lesson. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to provide clear, well structured explanations that help pupils to grasp ideas quickly. The pupils' understanding is enhanced further by the good use of examples to support these explanations. Questions are used well to test pupils' understanding, to involve pupils in the lessons and to stimulate class discussion. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson on light, an excellent rapport was established during which the teacher used questions and discussion well to help pupils contribute to, and understand an explanation of, the relationship between the angle of incidence and the angle of reflection or refraction. Pupils share their ideas and discuss solutions in solving complex problems.
 4. Although there is a wide range of practice in lesson planning, some of which lacks sufficient detail, particularly of the intended learning outcomes, teaching is purposeful and usually proceeds at a good pace. This ensures that pupils cover sufficient subject material during the lesson and extend and consolidate their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers' expectations in terms of the quality of the work and of the amount of work that pupils will cover during the lesson are often high. This leads to good progress by many pupils.
 5. Teaching of science is particularly strong with a high proportion of teaching being good or better. The quality of explanations and questioning is particularly high. Teaching of mathematics at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is always at least satisfactory and often good. The teaching enables pupils to understand and apply specific numeracy and algebra skills, which makes the rest of the mathematics curriculum easier to follow and understand. Teaching of English is often good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and able to communicate that enthusiasm to pupils, for example, when discussing the issues of characterisation in a play.
 6. All teachers are keen for their pupils to succeed and many are skilled in giving individual help and guidance. Their positive and supportive relationships with the pupils promote pupils' self-confidence, and as a result the pupils ask for help readily. In mathematics, English and information studies lessons, where gifted and talented pupils are given more challenging extension work, their progress is good. In art, some pupils are inspired to produce work of a very high standard, including impressive three-dimensional pieces.
 7. Teachers usually mark pupils' work and provide encouraging written comments. There is good

practice in a few subjects, such as mathematics, where marking includes guidance to pupils on how they could improve their work generally or overcome specific difficulties.

8. The English, mathematics and science departments prepare pupils well for Key Stage 3 tests. This preparation, which builds on the good development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, throughout Years 7-9, enables them to achieve high standards. The use of mental mathematics is particularly effective in developing pupils' understanding of number concepts.
9. In some subjects, such as English language and literature, art and design, information studies, science, geography and physical education, teaching has led to particularly high standards at GCSE level, which contribute very significantly to the school's overall GCSE results.
10. Homework is generally used well to support pupils' learning. Pupils are given a range of appropriate tasks, which they usually complete conscientiously and to a good standard. Homework contributes well to the development of pupils' understanding although this is not always set as required by the school's homework timetable.

Pupils behave very well and are committed to their school and to their learning.

11. Pupils are keen to attend the school and to take part in all aspects of school life. They speak positively of the school and its strengths, recognising and valuing its contribution to their lives, both academically and personally. They attend lessons punctually and behave, almost without exception, with the highest standards of courtesy and respect for each other and for their teachers. They show respect for the accommodation and treat school and other pupils' property with care.
12. Lessons are characterised by the pupils' willingness to work and to strive to improve. They are very willing to ask questions in order to understand better what they have to do, for example, staying behind at the end of an English lesson in order to clarify how they could improve GCSE grades. Pupils listen attentively in class discussions and respond with tolerance and understanding to the expression of viewpoints that challenge their own.
13. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent. Teachers work hard to establish a climate in which pupils see themselves valued as individuals and as part of the school community. Pupils entering the school complete brief 'fact-files' about themselves which are on display in their tutor rooms with their photographs and which reflect the interest that their teachers take in them beyond their lives at school. As a result pupils have high self-esteem and are markedly respectful of each other and of their teachers. Minor disputes between pupils are resolved equably and rapidly and pupils show maturity and good humour in accepting reproof.
14. Pupils are strongly encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a result, differences between members of the school community are resolved by reference to a moral framework in which pupils are encouraged to reflect upon the impact of their actions on the lives of others. Older pupils volunteer to take on a range of responsibilities throughout the school for the welfare of younger pupils, for example, in supporting them with their reading. Pupils very actively support fund-raising for charities concerned with people's welfare. The School Council is used as a forum for the discussion of issues such as bullying, and recently pupils contributed their views about the school's anti-bullying policy via a questionnaire seeking their opinions. This involvement in activities and policy development is successful in helping pupils develop a sense of responsibility.
15. Pupils behave extremely well in and around the school, sometimes in quite trying circumstances in crowded corridors where movement between classrooms is difficult. Older pupils successfully play football with much younger children and pupils actively seek to be of assistance to visitors to the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

16. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is a strength of St Bernard's. The school's strong Christian ethos has a positive impact not only upon the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, but also upon their social attitudes. Pupils interact well with each other and there is almost no anti-social behaviour, either in lessons or in the school generally. Pupils are keen to work collaboratively to raise funds to help others less fortunate than themselves. For instance, when studying mass production in Food Technology, Year 10 pupils used the opportunity to batch-bake large numbers of cakes to raise money for a charity. The school's ethos of personal accountability, self-control and tolerance, emphasised through the posters on display, finds expression in the harmonious relationships in evidence throughout the school.
17. The school's wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities contributes strongly to the pupils' sense of belonging to the school and plays an important part in its social cohesion. Residential trips, including those to the Lake District and Robin Hood's Bay, provide further opportunities for pupils to interact with one another and with their teachers in a less formal setting, and for them to increase their confidence and the social skills needed in adult life.
18. Social development is also emphasised in many lessons. Teachers make clear their expectations of pupils being able to handle difficult situations or differences of opinion without resort to aggression. In a Year 10 personal and social education lesson, for example, pupils discussed in a mature and thoughtful manner the differences between being passive, assertive and aggressive. They considered the merits of each of these attitudes and the inappropriateness of some behaviour.
19. Teachers successfully encourage a sense of personal and corporate morality both in school assemblies, where heads of year encourage pupils to report incidents that may adversely affect others, and in lessons where moral issues are debated. In history, for instance, pupils have recently been discussing the morality of child labour. In English younger pupils have considered in some depth issues of racism and intolerance raised in a novel they have studied.
20. The cultural development of pupils is enhanced through some very good work in art and music lessons, and through the school's wide range of extra-curricular musical and sporting activities. Some teachers do make a point of helping pupils to develop positive attitudes towards people from other cultural backgrounds. For example, in English, the teacher of a Year 11 class was sensitive to the racial and cultural issues raised by a poem, and pupils responded with interest and open-mindedness about the differences between Asian and European cultures. However, because the school does not promote multiculturalism systematically throughout the curriculum, opportunities to raise pupils' awareness are not always fully exploited.

The excellent quality of care, support and guidance for pupils enables them to thrive both academically and socially.

21. The school very effectively promotes the highest standards of good behaviour. In part this is because of the increasing effectiveness of its systems for monitoring pupils' behaviour through the work of form tutors and heads of year. This allows for early intervention when pupils are experiencing difficulties. It is also due to the strong community ethos of the school, promoted very actively by adults and pupils, which emphasises the need for personal and social responsibility. This ethos is communicated through policies which are promoted actively and displayed in classrooms, for example, anti-bullying strategies, and through the consistent references to personal accountability and corporate responsibility for actions to which teachers refer when dealing with issues of discipline. As a result the school has very few instances of misbehaviour, the level of fixed-term exclusions is low, and there are no instances of graffiti or vandalism in evidence.
22. Pupils' positive attitudes also permeate their approaches to academic work. The readiness with which teachers provide encouragement and support helps pupils to feel secure and to enjoy their

work. For example, a group of older pupils, when discussing difficulties they were experiencing with completing coursework to deadlines showed a mature attitude. They realised the importance of not making excuses and talked of negotiating extension time, and of discussing with their parents and with their teachers the difficulties they were facing sufficiently early for them to be addressed.

23. In discussion pupils emphasise their sense of the school as a caring environment in which to live and work. Procedures for child protection are securely in place and are underpinned by the secure knowledge that teachers have of pupils' personal circumstances.

The school uses data well to measure performance and to set targets for improvement.

24. The senior managers have built upon the school's many successes and have improved attainment further. They have undertaken major developments in the last three years in the use of national and local comparative performance information to analyse the school's strengths and areas for development. This information is shared with members of the governing body who use it when considering strategic spending and other priorities, and it is shared with heads of subject departments to enable them to analyse in some detail the progress made by their pupils. This data, together with a wider ranging departmental self review, are important elements in the annual review meeting between heads of department and the headteacher.
25. Well produced and informative statistical information is also used by the school to set challenging improvement targets in each subject. Collectively, if achieved, these targets will result in a significant improvement in the school's overall performance, with very significant improvements in some subjects.
26. The results of national and other tests are used to ensure that pupils are placed in the teaching groups most appropriate to their needs. This information is also used in some subjects, such as mathematics, to monitor the progress made by individual pupils so that any under-achievement can be identified and appropriate action taken to bring about the necessary improvement in standards.
27. In some subjects, such as mathematics and information studies, very detailed records of pupil progress are kept. These are shared with parents at consultation evenings, and with the pupils themselves who are able to see the progress they are making and deal with any areas where their performance is less than satisfactory.
28. Each year statistical and other information is used to identify a group of pupils who would benefit from additional mentoring as part of Project Rallye. The pupils work together regularly with a small team of teachers, sharing their concerns and looking for ways of overcoming any difficulties they face. This approach was extremely successful last year, raising the attainment of all of the pupils engaged in the programme from their relatively low predictions to virtually all good (A*-C) GCSE grades.
29. Statistical information is also used to identify pupils who are particularly gifted and talented. As a result all teachers are given lists of the pupils in this category, although not all provide them with additional, more challenging work to extend their learning. This is an area that the school recognises it will have to develop further in order to ensure that these pupils work to their maximum potential.

The governors are very supportive of the school; they are well informed and are taking an

increasingly active role in the life of the school.

30. The school has a very supportive governing body that is well organised and decisive. It works hard to support the headteacher and other members of the school community. Its various committees have developed considerable expertise in their areas of responsibility, which include finance, buildings and premises, and curriculum.
31. The financial management of the school is effective. In the last three years the school has turned a small budget deficit into a small reserve amount, which will enable spending decisions in future to be made from a position of relative financial security. The governors determine spending priorities in conjunction with the school's senior managers; they monitor carefully the spending patterns of the school and ensure that value for money is obtained.
32. The governors and headteacher have been very effective in bringing about significant improvements to the school's accommodation. Older parts of the school have been refurbished imaginatively and to a good standard, and there are plans for new buildings and further modifications that will enhance the school significantly, especially for design technology and science. Governors recognise that there is still much to be done to bring the accommodation up to the desired standard. They have correctly identified the priorities for future work, and they are keen that the improvements of recent years continue until the whole of the school is both attractive and in good order.
33. The school's governors are taking an increasingly close interest in the academic life of the school. They receive good quality information about pupils' attainments and are kept informed by senior managers and heads of subject departments about plans for further improvement. Links between individual governors and subject departments are at present under-developed and the governing body is keen to build upon its growing interest in pupils' achievement by supporting further curriculum development. Where governors have invested in curriculum development and staffing, for instance, in mathematics and modern foreign languages, they maintain a keen and informed interest in the impact their decisions are having upon the attainment of the pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There is a lack of consistency in the way that teaching is monitored and evaluated.

34. There is much good teaching in the school that results in above average attainment. However, good practice is not consistently shared in order to make satisfactory teaching better. For instance, in English the spelling plan is not applied consistently throughout the department. Heads of department do not always formally monitor the work of their departments in order to ensure that all teaching meets the standards of the best.
35. Although some teachers are thorough in their planning of lessons, this is not consistent across the school and other teachers, some of whom simply produce a very brief prompt for lessons, need further guidance in this area if the quality of teaching is to be raised still further. Some lesson plans are not clear about the purpose of the lesson or how work will be differentiated to meet the needs of children of differing prior attainment. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs or who are gifted and talented do not have their needs met consistently and systematically in all lessons.
36. Many teachers mark pupils' work regularly and a few provide helpful comments that tell pupils how to improve. However, this practice is not consistent across the school. Heads of departments and senior managers should ensure that the practice of all teachers meets the standards routinely displayed by a substantial number of their colleagues.
37. Most teachers set homework regularly, and it is usually appropriate to the needs of the pupils.

This good practice is not consistent, however, and most weeks some children do not receive the full amount of homework. Senior and middle managers should ensure that homework is set regularly by all teachers in all subject areas.

38. Good lesson monitoring and evaluation exists in some subjects where the quality of teaching is formally assessed each half term, and the teachers given detailed and helpful feedback about their strengths and areas for development. There is particularly good practice in mathematics where the very good developments associated with the school's numeracy initiative are being monitored closely in the classroom. This degree of rigour now needs to be adopted throughout the school and in particular in those subjects where pupils' attainment is lower than the average of their other subjects. A greater emphasis on improving still further the quality of teaching, and the resulting quality of learning, should be a priority for the school's managers in their determination to see the school improve further.
- **Class teaching takes insufficient account of the needs of gifted and talented pupils and of the contents of individual education plans for those pupils with special educational needs.**
39. Some good practice in the school is helping gifted and talented pupils to achieve very high standards. For example, pupils in music have attended a series of workshops with world-class professional musicians. However, the support for these pupils, which is one focus of the school's involvement in the national 'Excellence in Cities' initiative, is not consistent across subjects. In particular, there is often insufficient challenge for these pupils in lessons because not enough attention is given to providing additional experiences, opportunities or resources for learning and more demanding tasks.
40. Teaching in lessons is generally well matched to the prior attainment of the majority of the pupils in classes and pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, not all teachers pay sufficient attention in their lessons to meeting the specific needs, as identified in each pupil's individual education plan. For example, where lower sets include significant numbers of pupils with individual education plans, the work in classes is generally well matched to their previous attainments but insufficient action is taken to address pupils' individual learning needs so that they can make progress in relation to their individual education plan targets.
41. The lack of focus in the teaching on the needs of gifted, talented and special educational needs pupils derives from insufficient planning by teachers to meet these needs. Many lesson plans are detailed and help teachers to meet the needs of all pupils but others lack sufficient detail and are simply one or two lines on what is to be covered during the lesson.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

42. In order to sustain the high standards and build upon the good work that is taking place the school should take the following action.
1. **Monitor and evaluate teaching more rigorously to ensure that school policies and procedures are followed consistently so that:**
 - all lesson planning is thorough and includes a clear statement of the intended learning outcomes, especially for gifted and talented pupils and those with individual education plans;
 - marking by all teachers meets the standards routinely displayed by most of their colleagues and includes guidance to pupils on how they could improve;
 - the practice that most teachers follow of setting appropriate homework, as required by the school's homework timetable, is followed by all teachers;
 - feedback on the quality of their work is used to help teachers to improve further.

2. Continue to build upon the good work done with gifted and talented pupils and meet the needs of those with individual education plans fully by ensuring that:

- all teachers are aware of the needs of these pupils;
- teachers plan to meet the needs of these pupils in classes by providing appropriate experiences, opportunities and resources for learning and evaluate the success of these.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	14	39	45	0	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	660	N/A
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	72	N/A

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	88	N/A

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	per cent
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	per cent
School data	0.5
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	62	73	135

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	40	44
	Girls	58	55	50
	Total	97	95	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	72 (78)	70 (64)	70 (55)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (38)	50 (36)	33(12)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	41	40
	Girls	56	58	53
	Total	91	99	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (69)	73 (67)	69 (58)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (23)	46 (39)	24 (17)
	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	55	62	117

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	34	53	55
	Girls	33	57	61
	Total	67	110	116
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (56)	94 (93)	99 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

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

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	653
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	38.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	252

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1509655
Total expenditure	1476528
Expenditure per pupil	2283
Balance brought forward from previous year	-2542
Balance carried forward to next year	30585

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	600
Number of questionnaires returned	160

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	49	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	45	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	45	6	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	54	9	0	1
The teaching is good.	53	43	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	43	13	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	28	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	45	11	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	55	37	3	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	42	2	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	37	7	2	4