

INSPECTION REPORT

ESKDALE SCHOOL

Whitby

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121668

Headteacher: Mr D. W. Bradley

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones
18462

Dates of inspection: 17th – 19th September 2001

Inspection number: 188739

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed Secondary

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 14

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Stainsacre Lane
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr I. Patterson

Date of previous inspection: 1st July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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18462	B. Jones	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further
9132	J. Godfrey	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12658	M. R. Beardsley	Team inspector	English Provision for students with special educational needs	
22531	D. Burbidge	Team inspector	Science Equality of opportunity	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design Geography	
20287	D. S. Harris	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Provision for students with English as an additional language	
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	History Religious education	
2079	T. Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Eskdale is an 11-14 middle-deemed-secondary school, located on the southern outskirts of Whitby. The school is of average size for middle schools, having 356 students on roll with equal numbers of boys and girls. Its students are drawn from the town and from surrounding villages. The villages are spread over a large area and some students travel a considerable distance, by train, bus and taxi. Some 16 primary schools send students to Eskdale, including some very small village schools. Students are drawn from a wide social background. On entry to the school, the attainment of students overall is broadly average. In total, 15 per cent of students are eligible for free school meals, which is in line with the national average. There are no students for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is 20 per cent, which is in line with the national average, and two per cent of students have statements of special educational need, which is also at the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school and provides good value for money. The leadership and management of the headteacher, senior staff and the governors are very good and they have been successful in raising standards. The teaching is good and students achieve well to attain above average standards. The school is well organised. Students develop positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave well. The school applies the principles of best value effectively to its use of resources and finances are managed well.

What the school does well

- Excellent leadership by the head teacher ensures a clear direction to the school's work.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and a significant proportion is very good.
- Students make good progress and achieve well. Standards are particularly high in English and drama.
- Very good provision for students' personal and social development helps to promote the very positive relationships in the school.
- The school provides a very good range of opportunities for students to participate in out-of-school activities in sport and the arts.
- There are excellent relationships with partner institutions and very good relationships with parents and with the local community. These help to promote high standards.

What could be improved

- Pupils' levels of attainment in German and music
- Attendance, which is below average.
- The development of skills of numeracy by all subjects across the curriculum.
- The quality of information about pupils' progress given to the parents in the school reports.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has shown good improvement since the previous inspection in July 1996. Standards have improved and students' National Curriculum test results in Year 9 have risen and been maintained at a level above the national average. The work seen in the inspection confirms these standards, showing that students achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The quality of teaching has improved. The school has responded effectively to the key issues in the previous report and other issues highlighted in the report. The school has improved in its procedures for monitoring and evaluating its work and has good capacity and commitment to improve further. The school still does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
End of Key Stage 3 tests	B	A	B	A

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

The majority of students enter the school with levels of attainment that, overall, are broadly average. By the age of 14, the standards that students attain are above average and this represents a good level of achievement. In the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests, the results of students at the end of Year 9 were above average overall in English and science, and well above average in mathematics. The results were well above average in all three subjects when compared to schools having a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals. The trend in results in recent years is below the national trend, but at a level consistently above the national average. The school's targets for improvement are appropriate and the school is on line to meet them. At the time of the inspection, final comparative tables were not available for the Year 2001 National Curriculum results. The provisional tables indicate that the school's results are above average overall, and well above average in English.

In the work seen in the inspection, the standards of work in Year 9 are in line with recent National Curriculum test results and are above the national average. In English, standards are well above average. These students achieve well, having entered the school with above average levels of attainment in English. In mathematics and science, students' attainment on entry was broadly in line with the average. They attain above average standards and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In other subjects in the curriculum, standards are well above average in drama. They are at or above average in all other subjects apart from

music and German where they are below average. Students achieve very well in drama and well in all other subjects apart from French, German and music. In French and music, students' levels of achievement are now satisfactory. Standards and students' achievement have improved in these two subjects this year as new teachers have made an impact. In German, students in Year 7 are achieving satisfactorily in response to improved teaching provision, but students are still under-achieving in Years 8 and 9 as a result of poor attitudes established over the past two years. Standards of literacy are above level expected nationally and numeracy standards are broadly in line with the average. Students with special educational needs achieve well as do higher attaining students and those identified as gifted and talented. In the work seen in the inspection, there were no consistent or significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.

The leadership and management have improved the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection leading to an improvement in standards. They have also made a good start in introducing individual targets for Year 9 students. This is having a positive effect in encouraging this group to achieve their best standards and in tackling under-achievement.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Students show enthusiasm in their lessons. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in out-of-school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good behaviour in and out of lessons. Students know right from wrong and understand the boundaries of acceptable conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Provision for students' personal development is very good and relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good. The school provides students with very good opportunities to exercise responsibility and they respond well
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Levels of attendance are significantly below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9
Quality of teaching	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 quality of teaching, and the learning that results are good throughout the school and across all subjects. Teaching is good or better in over four in five lessons and very good in around a third of lessons. The teaching seen was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson observed and excellent teaching was seen in two lessons. This

is an improvement since the previous inspection and is the main reason for the improved levels of achievement of students.

The skills in literacy are taught well in English and in other subjects in the curriculum. The general contribution made by teaching in other subjects than mathematics to developing students' numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. However, the school development plan outlines improvements to tackle this in the current academic year. The majority of other subjects in the school curriculum are now using information and communication technology (ICT) satisfactorily to teach basic skills.

Throughout the Years 7 to 9, the teaching is very good in art and design and religious education. It is good in all other subjects, including the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. The teaching has improved in French, German and music as new teachers have made an impact this year. This is raising standards and improving learning in these subjects. In German this rise in standards is only seen to date in Year 7 because students in Years 8 and 9 developed poor attitudes towards the subject that will take a longer period of time to change.

Teachers know their students well and know their strengths and weaknesses. They plan effectively to ensure that the different needs of students are met and students are stretched and achieve well. The relationships between students and teachers are very good and students usually behave well. As a result, students work hard and learn well. Teachers generally manage their classes very well and use appropriate methods and organisation. They use the time available to them to good effect by employing a variety of activities and a range of approaches best suited to the activities. This ensures good learning. Teachers generally use homework in a satisfactory manner to further support students' learning.

Specialist teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and where non-specialist teaching takes place, standards are not adversely affected because teachers plan well and receive good levels of specialist support. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching. High attaining students too, are taught well, make good progress and achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements.
Provision for students with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for students with special educational needs and they make good progress throughout the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is very good overall, particularly in the area of social development, where it is excellent. The ethos of the school is one where respect for the individual is promoted actively and effectively.

How well the school cares for its students	The standard of pastoral care for students is good. The provision for health and safety is satisfactory. The procedures for child protection are thorough and personal support and guidance for students are good.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Parents are very satisfied with the school in general and make a positive contribution to their children's learning. The school's partnership with parents is good, but the quality of information which they receive in reports needs improvement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and ensures a clear educational direction for the school's work. Senior managers are new to their roles and are establishing an effective contribution to the running of the school. Key staff have good levels of commitment and energy in pursuing continued improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very good understanding of the school's work and they are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is an improving feature of the school's work. It is currently good and systems and strategies are in place to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Learning resources are good and there is an adequate level of staffing. The accommodation is good and used well. There are clear priorities, which are supported by careful financial planning. The principles of best value are applied effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership of the school and the enthusiasm of the staff as a whole. • The wide range of opportunities for students to follow their own particular interests whether in Music, the Arts or Sport. • The fact that their children are happy in the school and teachers are easily approachable. • The discipline is good. • Excellent systems for settling in new students particularly into Year 7 and very good transfer arrangements into the high school. • Excellent links with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no concerns expressed that found accord with any significant number of the parents present. There was some divergence of opinion about the amount of homework set and how homework is used.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views about the school. The team found that, overall, homework is used in a satisfactory manner and some subject departments use homework very effectively to extend students' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. The majority of students entered the school with levels of attainment that, overall, were broadly in line with the national average. By the age of 14, students attain standards above the national average and this represents a good level of achievement.

2. In the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests, the results of students at the end of

Year 9 were above average overall in English and science, and well above average in mathematics, when compared with schools nationally. The results were well above average in all three subjects compared to schools with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals. Apart from English, where girls' results were significantly higher, boys and girls attain similar results, any differences being broadly in line with differences between the two groups nationally. The trend in results in recent years is below the national trend, but results have been maintained consistently above the national average. The school's targets for improvement, particularly in English and science are challenging and the school is on line to meet them. At the time of the inspection, final comparative tables were not available for the Year 2001 National Curriculum results. The provisional tables indicate that the school's results continue to be above average overall, and the English results to be well above average.

3. In the work seen in the inspection, the standards of work of students in Year 9 are in line with recent results in the National Curriculum tests and are generally above the national average. This represents good achievement for these students, as their attainment on entry to the school was broadly average. In English, students in Year 9 attain standards that are well above average overall. This group of students entered the school with above average levels of attainment in English. They have made good progress and achieved well. In mathematics and science, Year 9 students' attainment on entry was broadly in line with the average. They attain above average standards, in line with recent National Curriculum results, indicating that they have made good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

4. Standards of work seen in the inspection are well above average in drama. Standards are above average in design and technology, history, physical education and religious education. In all other subjects, standards are in line with national averages apart from music and German where they are below average.

5. Throughout the Years 7 to 9, students make very good progress and achieve very well in drama. In all other subjects apart from French, German and music, students achieve well in relation to their attainment levels on entering the school. In

French, students achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment. In German, students in Years 8 and 9 are not yet achieving the standards of which they are capable. The impact of new teaching, however, is beginning to make its mark and attainment among students starting German in Year 7 is well in line with standards expected nationally and they are achieving satisfactorily. In music, students have under-achieved in the past two years, and Year 9 students' levels of attainment are consequently below average. However the good teaching they are now receiving has led to their achieving better standards and they are currently making satisfactory progress.

6. Although students enter the school with levels of attainment that are overall broadly in line with the average, there is a wide range of attainment. The current Year 7 group of students, for example, contain a higher than usual proportion of students with special educational needs. Students with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. They achieve the standards agreed as targets in their individual educational plans and achieve well, in line with the achievement of their peers. The small number of students who are withdrawn from some lessons make good progress in developing their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Higher attaining students and those identified as gifted and talented also achieve well. In the work seen in the inspection, there were no consistent or significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.

7. Standards of literacy are above average. Standards of speaking and listening are average. Students of all levels of attainment express their views and experiences clearly when given the opportunity, and they listen well as shown in their responses to questions. Most departments emphasise the use of technical language and students use it accurately. Reading standards are above average, as students read, understand and analyse texts of increasing complexity as they mature. Students who have weak reading skills on entry receive extra help, which enables them to make good progress. Writing is above average, and by the end of Year 9, it is well above average. Students write for a range of purposes, with increasing fluency and confidence. Poetry is particularly strong. The work of higher ability students is accurate and fluent. Middle and lower ability students' work is lively and imaginative, but often marred by basic spelling errors. Work is usually well presented.

8. Standards of numeracy are average for the majority of students. By the end of Year 9 most students have made good progress with consolidating their number skills. Most students are able to handle numbers mentally with confidence, although the lowest attaining students still have difficulty with their tables. Algebraic skills develop well; by the end of Year 9 most students are able to simplify algebraic expressions and solve equations. In science students are able to calculate accurately using formulae. Students' understanding of shape and space are broadly in line with the average. In geography students are able to use coordinates confidently in map work. Data handling skills develop well; average attaining students are able to use frequency tables and can calculate probabilities. Problem solving skills are also well developed, for example in investigational tasks, students can identify patterns and find rules.

9. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. In the last report, the standards that students attained were described as mainly in line with the national average. They are now mainly above average. Overall, students make good progress through the school and achieve well in response to the good, and often very good teaching that they receive. During the first year in the school, students consolidate good attitudes towards their work, which helps them to improve their approach to learning as they move through the school. The leadership and management have improved the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. They have also made a good start in introducing individual targets for improvement for current Year 9 students. This process is having a positive effect in encouraging this group to achieve their best standards. The process has also been effective in identifying a small group of students who are under-achieving and steps have been taken to help these students further. This work needs to be developed so that effective target setting becomes more embedded in the school's practice.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Students have good attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They like coming to school, but attendance is below the national average.

11. In lessons, students generally listen well to teachers and respond well to questions. They concentrate well on activities and persevere until tasks are complete. They persevered well in outdoor physical education lessons despite the poor weather conditions. Students are well motivated, especially in practical activities such as design and technology, art and design, history and physical education. Many students are keen to volunteer to read from books and from their own work to the rest of the class, for instance in English. Their confidence in their own ability is evident. Although younger and lower attaining students often require a great deal of input from teachers, older students take increasing responsibility for their own learning. This is evident in subjects such as physical education where they organise teams and games themselves, both in lessons and for inter-house and inter-form competitions. Students who do not participate in physical education umpire the games. They use the Internet to research information, for example about chemical formulae in science and castles in history. Students in Year 9 track their own progress against National Curriculum levels and are aware of their individual targets for academic achievement.

12. Behaviour in lessons is nearly always good and sometimes very good, especially in subjects that they seem to enjoy the most. Only on a few occasions is the behaviour of some of the lower attaining students, mainly boys, less than satisfactory in lessons. Students behave well at break times and can be trusted to carry out responsibilities around the school with minimum supervision. They are very courteous to visitors and teachers. Students look after resources and equipment well and respect their school environment. Students in Year 7 took good care of the living creatures in their science lesson. There were 26 fixed term exclusions and one permanent exclusion last year, which is similar to the last inspection, but higher than the previous year. The main reason for this was the unusually high number of lessons taught by supply teachers who were unfamiliar with the behaviour policy. Students were excluded for disruptive behaviour and use of abusive language.

13. Relationships across the school are very good. Students like their teachers and form good and constructive relationships with each other. They cooperate well in pairs and groups, listen sympathetically to each other and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. There is very little bullying in school, but occasional incidents are dealt with quickly, sensitively and effectively. Students appreciate the friendly working atmosphere in the school. Students in Years 8 and 9 take good care of new students in Year 7. Students share resources very well in English, art and design and history for example and cooperate very well in practical activities, whether in friendship groups or those dictated by teachers. In physical education there is a very good sense of team spirit.

14. Students' personal development is very good. They enjoy the many opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. Each form has one representative on the school council, which meets regularly to discuss issues raised by the students. A good proportion of students in Year 9 apply for posts as "Stewards" and most are accepted each year. They perform their duties diligently. These include the monitoring of corridors during lunch times. Students also enjoy working as careers' librarians, house captains and games captains. Form tutor groups take it in turns to lead assemblies.

15. Good relationships within the school are effective in ensuring that the students with special educational needs are happy and secure in their learning environment. They have positive attitudes to learning and cooperate well with teachers and with each other. Sometimes concentration falters a little at the end of a long lesson, but generally, most students behave well. For those on behavioural management programmes, there is a good degree of success in improving their behaviour.

16. Students support the wide range of extra-curricular activities very well and this has a very good impact on their personal development. They particularly enjoy the sporting activities, in which around three quarters of students in the school are involved. The school orchestra is well supported. Students regularly support a variety of charities and raise large sums of money each year. Several students participated in the recent Great North Fun Run and raised nearly £1500 in sponsorship. They have raised £4000 for "Whizz Kids" in order to send two teachers to Peru to support disabled children. There is very good participation by students in community activities such as the Eskdale Music Festival. A good proportion of students enjoy the many day and residential visits arranged by the school. The students are very good ambassadors for the school within the community.

17. Attendance is below the national average for schools of this type, but last year's attendance figures were significantly below the national average when they dropped to under ninety per cent. This was caused mainly by the large numbers of families in the school who were directly affected by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in February. Students were not sent to school for a significant period of time for fear of spreading the disease. Severe flooding in Lealholm prevented some students from reaching the school last winter. A higher than average level of authorised absence is partly due to the large number of activities out of school, such as residential visits, theatre visits, a field trip to the Isle of Wight, a visit to Yorkshire Coast College, hockey trials and soccer coaching. Punctuality is generally good but is sometimes adversely affected by the vagaries of the transport which is used by large proportion of the students who travel to school from long distances. Punctuality between lessons is mostly good and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is good overall and there is a significant amount of very good teaching and some that is of the highest quality. As a result, students acquire good learning habits and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

Only one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory and all others were at least satisfactory. Teaching was good or better in over four in five lessons seen and very good or better in around a third of lessons. In two lessons, the teaching was excellent. There was little variation between the years and the consistency of good teaching is a strength of the school. This good provision is the main reason for students attaining higher than average standards from a starting point on entry to the school that is broadly in line with the average. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

19. Throughout the Years 7 to 9, the teaching is very good in art and design and religious education. It is good in all other subjects, including the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. Teaching has improved in French, German and music as new teachers have made an impact this year. This is raising standards and improving learning in these three subjects.

20. Students respond positively to the good teaching and achieve well as they progress through the school. Progress is consistently good in English, mathematics and science and in the large majority of other subjects, and students achieve well. Students with special educational needs make good progress in their learning as do higher attainers and those students identified as gifted and talented. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it was generally the result of teachers using a restricted approach and relying too heavily upon textbooks. On occasion, learning was adversely affected when teachers did not follow the school's policy on managing poor behaviour.

21. The basic skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT are generally taught well in individual lessons planned specifically for those subjects. The contribution of other subjects to the teaching of the basic skills of literacy varies from subject to subject, but is generally good. Many teachers include literacy objectives in their planning. There is some good practice in developing the range of writing styles, for instance in science, history and religious education. Some teachers also encourage the development of reading skills, giving guidance on how to read aloud. Most teachers emphasise the use of appropriate technical language, and often correct spelling errors in written work. The teaching of numeracy skills is good in mathematics and other subject areas make a positive contribution to developing students' numeracy skills, for example, science, design and technology, geography and art and design. However, the lack of a whole-school numeracy policy, and the absence of formal planning by other subjects to develop numeracy, means that teaching in this area is currently unsatisfactory. The school has already identified this as an issue and has well-formulated plans published in the school development plan to tackle the problem. The teaching of ICT is good within the subject, and other subjects make a satisfactory contribution to developing students' ICT skills.

22. In this small school, teachers know their students well and have a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use this knowledge well to ensure that the different needs of students are met and students are stretched and achieve well. The relationships between students and teachers are very good and students behave well as a result. Teachers generally manage their classes very well and use appropriate methods and organisation. They use the time available to them to good effect by employing a variety of activities and a range of approaches best suited to the activities.

23. Across the range of subjects, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their specialisms and they teach with confidence. For example in a Year 9 English lesson, students were taught how to create suspense and tension in their stories. Very good subject knowledge enabled the teacher to analyse sentence structure and describe the use of first person narrative in such a way that it brought to life strategies for students to use to improve their creative writing. Where non-specialist teaching takes place, standards are not adversely affected because teachers plan well and receive good levels of specialist support.

24. Teachers are well prepared and organised and plan clear objectives for lessons. In a very good French lesson, Year 7 students benefited from rigorous preparation that ensured a variety of methods and activities served the over-riding

objectives of the lesson to increase vocabulary and improve pronunciation. Very good learning resulted as changes took place in methods that were swift and seamless. In such lessons, there is a good climate for learning, particularly where teachers have high expectations relating to the quality of work produced. For example in a Year 9 art and design lesson, the teacher insisted on good observing and drawing skills and students responded by producing their best work. Learning and achievement were high in this and other such lessons.

25. In the best lessons, very good planning draws upon good assessment systems to closely target the needs of all students. For example in science, the teacher planned carefully and ensured that a student with a very specific need was supported effectively whilst also ensuring that there was extension work planned for the highest attainers in the class. As well as using formal assessment of students' work, teachers often respond well as they assess students' responses to questions and tasks set and stretch students' abilities to produce either more or better quality answers. Day-to-day assessment is increasingly being used to good effect, particularly in Year 9 where formal targets have been set for all individuals in all subjects. As well as producing a spur to all, the process has revealed that a small minority of students are under-achieving and need additional support. The quality of students' learning has been enhanced by more closely targeted teaching.

26. Teachers make good use of well-tested teaching strategies. These include clear explanations to introduce new material and the aims of the lesson and a review of students' progress at the end of lessons. For example in a Year 8 religious education lesson there was a good structure that included introduction and consolidation of work from the previous lesson. A variety of activities followed that included whole class and group work before the lesson was concluded with an effective plenary session to reinforce the idea of how Christians may think about the environment. The pace was high and very good learning took place.

27. Homework is used regularly and systematically in subjects throughout the curriculum and there are examples of very effective use of homework, for instance in English. Students' descriptions of the amount and type of homework set confirmed the team's judgement that this aspect of the school's work is satisfactory.

28. There is a good whole-school commitment to the inclusion and integration of students with special educational needs. Teachers' expectations of their efforts and achievements match their expectations of other students in the class, and teachers often adapt their questioning, as well as the material they use, to include this special group. Classroom assistants also provide valuable support to students, and in many lessons, teachers ensure that the assistants have plans that identify what they want the students to achieve in the lesson. For example in an excellent mathematics lesson with Year 8 students, the support assistant knew the instructions for students that enabled very effective in-class support to be given. Students' progress towards their targets is constantly monitored and recorded by the support assistants, who sometimes help teach specific parts of the students' programmes, usually literacy or numeracy, sometimes on an individual basis and sometimes supporting generally. The teaching of small withdrawal groups is very well planned and well taught. High attaining students too, are taught well, make good progress and achieve well. There

is no formal policy relating to students who are gifted and talented, but these students are identified and receive good curricular provision, supplemented by very good opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities that meet their needs.

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

29. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and in line with the school aims. A review of curriculum planning has enabled more time to be allocated to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science since the last inspection. All year groups are now taught ICT as a separate subject by specialists and provision is satisfactory. Sufficient time is allocated to the teaching of modern foreign languages. Social studies and careers are now taught within the personal, health and social education programme across Years 7 to 9. Health education is taught within the same programme, and through science and physical education. All aspects are taught effectively.

30. National Curriculum subjects, and religious education, are taught in each year group. Insufficient time is allowed in art and design and music for the curriculum to be taught with enough breadth, depth and continuity. Students are placed into ability groups from Year 7. Movement between groups is always possible, and is co-ordinated by pastoral heads at the end of each term. There is provision for additional subject setting by attainment level in the core subjects in Years 8 and 9, and occasionally in Year 7. These setting arrangements work successfully. Different group arrangements for textiles, design and technology, food technology, art and design, music, ICT and drama enable small classes to operate. Total teaching time for all year groups is a little below that recommended which accounts for the constraints of time on the teaching of art and design and music.

31. Provision for extra-curricular activities continues to be very good. A full range of opportunities through physical education attracts 75 per cent of the school community, with eleven members of staff involved. There are regular field trips and visits to the theatre, and to art galleries. Visiting artists, musicians, storytellers, dancers and drama groups enrich the curriculum. Visits abroad are undertaken. Students can attend low cost residential courses at a local centre. Scarborough's Theatre in the Round uses the school as an outreach centre, providing many drama opportunities. There is a large annual drama/music production and carol concert.

32. Students with special educational needs have the same curricular opportunities as their peers. Some students are withdrawn from a lesson for a short time so that their individual needs can be met. This is carefully managed to ensure the minimum of disruption to their learning. They participate in all school activities, receiving good support where necessary to enable this.

33. The detail of the school policy statement is fully implemented and the school provides equal opportunities for all students. Each student is valued equally regardless of sex, race, culture or disability. There is equal access for both boys and girls to the curriculum. In physical education there are mixed hockey, basketball,

and rounders teams competing within the school. Boys partake in dance lessons, boys and girls play in the school orchestra and there is also a girls' football team. All students have equal access to the modern foreign language curriculum, although able linguists do not have opportunity to pursue the second foreign language in the school. The appropriateness of teaching and learning materials is given high consideration. For example, in English positive steps have been taken in the choice of resources to ensure that the interest of boys is captured and their attainment has risen as a result. To assist potential financial costs for parents the school has a cost-effective approach to the supply of uniform and has two alternatively costed extra-curricular residential visits. The school ensures that all students have access to taught ICT lessons to ensure that some students are not disadvantaged by not having one in their own home.

34. The school has a very good programme for personal, health and social education that has a very good impact on students' personal and social development. It includes healthy lifestyle, sex education, drug education, relationships, first aid and citizenship. Staff who specialise in these areas teach lessons effectively and are supported by visiting specialists such as the school nurse and community police. Personal, social and health education provision is supported in many other areas of the curriculum, such as health education in food technology and science. Citizenship is a recent introduction and is popular with students. An audit of citizenship input across the curriculum is planned for later in the term. The use of activities like "Circle time" and "The real game" has had a very positive impact on students' self-confidence and ability to express themselves. Students' work in personal, health and social education is well presented, stored neatly in individual folders and marked regularly. Units of work are regularly reviewed and updated.

35. Provision for careers education is very good and the school has been awarded the Quality Mark for Careers. A qualified teacher delivers careers lessons with good support from the careers service. The local careers adviser has worked with the school for a long period of time and has a good knowledge of the students and the community. The school's good links within the community and especially with Whitby Community College support the careers programme well. The school alternates with the other middle school in the area to host an annual careers event for students in Year 9. This gives students a good opportunity to explore options for their future education. Good guidance is offered for future GCSE options, with students sensibly encouraged to make their own choices. All students, including those with special educational needs, are well prepared for the next stages in their education.

36. The school has very good links with the community and these contribute very positively to students' learning and personal and social development. The school makes very good use of the local and wider community to support the curriculum, for example visits to local theatre help learning in English and drama, while visits to Whitby Abbey and field trips to the Isle of Wight help learning in history and geography. A local storyteller visits Year 7 English lessons. Achievement in physical education is greatly enhanced by students' participation in community sports. The school has good links with the Whitby Area Business Education Partnership that

benefit the careers programme. The Careers Event, held biennially in the school, is well supported by community organisations. The school assists in planning the Whitby Science and Technology Fair. The school and many of its students are very involved in the annual Eskdale Festival of Arts programme. This has a good impact on students' learning in art and design, drama and music. The school is very much part of the Whitby community with many community activities based in the school premises. The school's swimming pool and other sporting facilities are used well by the community.

37. The school's relationship with partner institutions is excellent. There are well-established formal and informal links with most of the many primary schools from which students enter the school. There is liaison between the subject departments and some useful cooperation has taken place between teachers in assessing the attainment of students in English, mathematics and science. Parents praised the excellent transfer and induction arrangements for students joining Year 7. The excellent liaison with primary school helps students settle quickly in Year 7 socially and academically. Very good account is taken of information received to ensure that students are in the right form tutor group. Primary schools make good use of the school's facilities, and together with transfer days in Year 6, this ensures that most students are familiar with the school and many of the staff before they arrive in Year 7. There is very good liaison for students with special educational needs. Useful links exist with the other local middle school.

38. Parents are appreciative of the school's excellent relationship with Whitby Community College, which ensures a smooth transfer for students to Year 10. This involves very good transfer of information, curriculum liaison and advice on GCSE options. Students in Year 9 attend the College for a week of workshops in the summer term and do a unit of GCSE work in some subjects. The schools have a shared policy on the transfer of information and record keeping and a similar behaviour policy. A 'Buddy' system is arranged for some students who need extra support. The school offers a good number of work experience placements to students from the Community College in the summer term.

39. Provision for spiritual development is good. It pervades the life of the school. This is reflected in the quality of the relationships and the concern for all within the school. The spiritual aspects of the major world religions are explored in good depth in religious education. Ideas such as justice are linked appropriately to forgiveness as in Christian teaching and give students opportunities for reflection. As part of their religious education course all students in Year 7 interview a member of a faith community to gain insight into what their faith means to these people. This enhances students' spiritual awareness. The school responds immediately and offers counselling to students concerned about family matters. Assemblies focus on spiritual aspects of life such as tragedies and students reflect on the nature of fear. There is prayer and reflection as part of all Assemblies. In music there are references to spirituality in the growth of the blues music. The annual Carol Concert provides a spiritual experience for all. In art and design, students consider the effect of the beautiful and the unusual. In science students experience wonder at the effects of some chemical experiments. Students show a concern for the poor, the needy and the sick and work energetically for charities. They raised over £6,000 for

charities last year. The school is rightly proud of letters from parents expressing gratitude for the happy school environment their children experience while at school. There is no provision for a daily act of collective worship, so there are lost opportunities for further spiritual development.

40. The school's provision for students' moral education is very good. Teachers provide good role models and have clear expectations of good behaviour. Students understand the rules and consider them to be fair. There is a sensible system of sanctions and a good reward system. The school celebrates all forms of success and students' achievements are acknowledged and certificates presented in formal assemblies. Themes for assemblies reinforce moral messages. There is very good provision for moral development across the curriculum and especially in the personal and social education programme. In English, Year 7 students learn about 'doing the right thing' and in drama lessons students in Year 9 learn that it is important to keep promises. The difference between right and wrong is clearly taught in religious education. Good attention is given to environmental issues in several subjects such as religious education and geography. In physical education, students learn about fair play, honesty and playing to the rules. Students have good opportunities to demonstrate their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves through regular initiatives to raise money for charities.

41. The school's provision for social development is excellent. Students are given excellent opportunities in lessons and extra-curricular activities to work in pairs and groups. This has a very positive impact on learning and personal development. There is an excellent range of visits out of school where students can develop social skills, for example day trips to the Millennium Dome, Whitby Abbey, Flamingo Land, Wimbledon tennis championships, Bradford Museum of Photography. Similarly, students benefit from theatre and residential visits to the Isle of Wight, Bewerley Park Outdoor Pursuits Centre as well as ski trips and a planned visit to Disneyland in France. The school encourages students to take responsibility both collectively and individually. Students have very good opportunities to form relationships across the age groups within their house groups. The running of the school bank encourages students to assume social responsibility. The lunchtime dining arrangements provide very good opportunities for social interaction. The very good range of extra-curricular activities provides extremely well for social development, especially in sports and the arts. Teachers' willingness to participate in these activities provides students with excellent role models in social development. The school's very good links with the community encourage students to take an active part in the local community and develop an understanding of citizenship. Students are encouraged to take part in a wide range of local community activities that contribute very positively to their social development.

42. Provision for students' cultural development is good. The school offers many opportunities for students to learn about and participate in their own culture through their studies of literature, art and design, music, history and geography on the curriculum. The very broad programme of extra-curricular activities makes a particular contribution in this respect, for example through the appreciation and performance of drama, dance and music. Visits to the theatre, museums and art galleries provide further enrichment for the many students who take part. At the time

of the inspection, for example, a large party of students attended an evening performance of African dance. Visiting artists, performers and sports players are invited to demonstrate their skills. The school helps students to understand the diversity and richness of other cultures through art and design, for example, where students are encouraged to appreciate the work of artists from around the world; through geography and the specific problems of developing countries; and through religious education where the major world religions are studied. In order to broaden students' awareness of the diverse heritage of contemporary British society there is scope for regular visits to places of worship and other cultural centres.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

43. The school provides a good level of pastoral care for students, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is satisfactory educational support to monitor students' achievements and enable them to make further progress with their learning. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good.

44. The tutorial system aims for students to remain with the same teacher throughout their time in school. Very good relationships are established between teachers and students that enable teachers to monitor progress effectively and provide a good level of academic and personal support. The heads of years have an overview of students' academic progress and personal development. In this small school environment, students know teachers well and are confident in approaching any of them with problems or concerns. Students' academic progress and personal development are tracked through records of achievements and interim reports. Students in Year 9 have a review sheet with expected National Curriculum levels. Appropriate use is made of outside agencies to support students.

45. Excellent liaison with primary schools and an excellent induction process help new students to settle well in Year 7. Year 6 students are given good opportunities to visit the school so they become familiar with the school and its procedures. There is a very good exchange of information within the Whitby partnership of school, especially for students with special educational needs and students are placed in appropriate form tutor groups. Those with special educational needs and those coming from very small primary schools are placed in smaller form groups and given extra support at the start of their secondary school career. New students receive a good level of care. There is a very good programme of personal and social education to support students' personal development. Students have careers lessons from Year 7 and are offered very good guidance on option choices in Year 9.

46. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory overall. There are some weaknesses in the procedures for recording students' attendance. On several occasions more than ten days of holiday in one year has been authorised for students by the school and summaries of authorised and

unauthorised absence are not accurate. Figures for unauthorised absence are not reported in students' annual records of achievement. Registration periods are short and manual registers are marked efficiently. The short registration time encourages students to be punctual for school. Good systems are in place to monitor lateness and encourage students to be punctual. Students are permitted to have mobile telephones in order to report the late running of transport to the school. The school rightly reminds parents of the importance of good attendance. A first day response call to absence has begun this term and parents have responded well. Good attendance is not yet sufficiently rewarded, but the school is currently considering the introduction of further rewards. Better use could be made of attendance statistics to target areas for improvement. There is good support from the educational welfare service..

47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. The behaviour policy is positive and used very effectively by most members of staff. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and students respond accordingly. Rules are simple and students know what is expected of them. Students believe sanctions to be used fairly and they appreciate the extensive rewards system. Good records are kept of all incidents of poor behaviour and also of house points. Incidents resulting in exclusions are properly recorded. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating bullying are very good. There is a good awareness of bullying issues in school and students are confident that any reported incident will be resolved quickly and to their satisfaction.

48. The school takes satisfactory care of students' welfare. Measures to ensure the health and safety of all students are satisfactory. Teachers take great care to follow safe procedures in lessons, but it is unsatisfactory that there are no formal written risk assessments. A new person has responsibility for health and safety issues but has not yet had formal training. It is unsatisfactory that records of emergency evacuation drills are not kept in school. The fire exit route from the ICT room is unsafe. The shared use of the drive by students and traffic is hazardous. Dust extraction facilities have been installed in the science and design technology areas since the last inspection. First aid procedures are good and very good records are kept. The school nurse is a regular visitor and is available for confidential counselling. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are effective. The school maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies.

49. The schools' procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good. Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, reading and spelling tests are used to build up a clear picture of students' attainment when they arrive at the school. These are used to place students into appropriate groups. Regular monitoring and progress reports are given during each year and these are used to set targets for students. All subjects have at least satisfactory systems in place for assessing students' attainment and progress as they pass through the school. They are particularly good in, for example, English. In mathematics they need to be more clearly focused on monitoring progress. Good records are kept in most subjects of the curriculum.

50. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. The data which is provided is being used well in some subjects, for example, English and religious education. In English, assessment is used well to modify units of work. In many others, however, for example physical education, art and design and geography, it is not being used well enough when reviewing the curriculum or planning teaching to cater for students' individual needs. Teachers set subject targets for students with special educational needs in well-constructed individual learning plans. These are reviewed regularly. Monitoring procedures are good. Students are assessed at regular intervals to monitor progress in reading and spelling. The classroom assistants keep a record of their day-to-day progress.

51. The overall procedures for monitoring and supporting students' progress are satisfactory. The school has begun to provide a good range of data that will allow subjects to monitor the progress of students. Some subjects, for example, English, science, religious education and history make good use of assessment to track students' progress as they move through the school. The use of national benchmark information to monitor subject performance is not yet well developed across the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. The school has a good partnership with parents. Parents are very pleased with the school and make a good contribution to their children's education. The school is popular in the local and wider community. Parents' involvement has a good impact on the work of the school. Parents like the leadership of the school and the enthusiasm of the staff. They like the wide range of opportunities for students to follow their own particular interests. Parents like the fact that their children are happy in school. They find teachers very approachable and friendly. Parents appreciate the excellent systems for settling in new students particularly into Year 7 and the very good transfer arrangements into the Community College. Complaints and suggestions from parents are received positively and any problems are settled quickly and amicably. Parents all agree that expectations are high and teaching is good. Only a few parents feel the level of homework is wrong. The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views about the school. The team found that, overall, homework is used in a satisfactory manner and some subject departments use homework very effectively to extend students' learning.

53. The school provides a satisfactory level of information to parents. Letters are informative and the prospectus provides parents with useful information. Parents are pleased with the information about their children's progress, but inspectors judge that students' annual reports (records of achievement) are unsatisfactory. Parents receive an interim report and a record of achievement and are invited to two consultations evenings each year. Students' reports are brief and contain insufficient information in most subjects on what students know and understand. Targets are vague and more often for personal development than academic achievement, although the school is currently improving this feature of its work with students in Years 8 and 9. Reports on art and design, ICT and music are particularly short and undervalue these subjects. Although grades for effort and achievement

are given, National Curriculum levels are not included. Levels of unauthorised absence are not reported. Parental attendance at consultation evenings is good. Parents monitor their children's work through the student planners, which are used well.

54. The school welcomes parents into school. Parents enjoy school concerts and plays. They also attend careers evenings, mathematics evenings and an information evening on citizenship. Parents provide a very good level of Internet access for their children, but have little involvement in other academic areas other than through the parent representatives on the governing body. Two parents who are doctors accompany students on their ski trip and ensure good support for the health and safety of students. The combination of the governing body annual meeting for parents with a presentation evening encourages a good level of attendance by parents. The school is successfully establishing a first day absence call system with good support from parents. The school needs to use the good relationship it has with parents to gain their cooperation in improving attendance levels.

55. The Parent Teachers Association makes a very good contribution to the social and financial life of the school. They organise the Christmas Draw, a sponsored walk and help with the "Easy Band Concert" in Whitby pavilion each year. They raise a substantial amount of money each year that is used to improve school resources, such as the minibus, basketball nets, computers, curtains for the hall and table tennis tables.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, senior staff and the governing body is very good. The headteacher's contribution in ensuring a clear educational direction to the work of the school in line with its aims is excellent. The priorities established in the school development plan are appropriate and there are good systems and strategies in place to monitor and evaluate the success in meeting these priorities. A good level of improvement has taken place since the previous inspection and procedures have been put in place that have been successful in raising standards. The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are good. For example, the school monitors the quality of teaching and learning well and this has led to an improvement in both areas and a rise in standards. Some weaknesses were revealed during the process and measures taken to counter them. As a result there have been new appointments to the teaching staff and standards are improving in music, and French. In German, standards are still below average at this early point in the year, but there are positive signs of improvement in Year 7 students' work.

57. The school has taken a positive approach to performance management. Procedures are satisfactory and the processes for identifying and spreading good teaching practice are developing well as a result. The school is well organised and targets for whole-school improvement are used effectively to raise standards. Increasingly, individual targets for students are being established to good effect in raising standards and tackling any under-achievement.

58. The senior management team has been re-structured recently and they have a clear vision of the direction the school is taking. This vision is informed by a clear set of aims that guides the work of the school. Both senior managers and subject department and year heads demonstrate energy and a strong commitment to raising standards further. There has been an emphasis on improving the standard of teaching and the quality of teaching is now good overall, with around a third of teaching that is very good and some teaching of the highest order. In no area is teaching unsatisfactory. The senior managers have identified the weakness in subjects' contribution to developing numeracy skills and have signalled their intention to tackle this in the school development plan.

59. The school's response to the previous inspection report has been positive and the school has responded well and successfully to the key issues identified in that report. The continuing process of improvement is now guided by a school development plan of good quality. The cycle of school development planning is good. The plans are manageable and the school has good levels of commitment to and capacity for further improvement. The plan is a good working document. It gives appropriate levels of detail about how the school's priorities are to be met and how financial and staffing resources are to be assigned to meet these priorities. It provides an effective framework for evaluating the success of initiatives taken.

60. The leadership of special educational needs is good. The special educational needs coordinator has established a very effective and caring provision, well supported by the named governor. The school makes good use of a range of outside agencies to support their students. Since the last inspection the coordinator has developed individual education plans with appropriate targets. However, some long-term targets are a little too broad to be manageable, and they need modifying. Individual education plans are reviewed twice a year and parents are kept fully informed and involved. There is a satisfactory level of support staff, and they are well qualified and support students well.

61. The relationship between the governing body and the staff of the school is good and enables governors to make a good contribution to the life and work of the school. Governors have a very good level of understanding of the strengths of the school as well as those areas needing further improvement. They are suitably involved in the strategic management of the school and make an effective contribution to the major decisions taken particularly about finance, staffing and the school's curriculum. Governors are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, although the school does not fully meet legal requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The governing body and senior managers deal well with the bureaucratic demands made upon the school. Governors are in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided.

62. The school is administered effectively, and satisfactory use is made of information technology. Daily routines operate unobtrusively. The process of financial planning is sound. Spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied effectively in the school's use of resources. Overall, the school gives good value for money. The governing body's finance committee has a very good level of awareness of the financial implications of meeting the planned priorities. It plans the annual budget accordingly. Financial administration is sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. There is a regular programme of external audit and the school has responded positively to the auditor's report. The recent deficit in the school's budget has been addressed in close co-operation with the Local Education Authority. Spending has been planned to ensure that resources for students are not adversely affected and the arrangements made to achieve a balance are satisfactory. The strategic use of resources is good and specific grants are used effectively.

63. Resources are good overall and they are used effectively to support students' learning. School expenditure on this aspect is high. Most departments have good supplies of books, equipment and consumables to support teaching and learning. Equipment is well maintained and treated with respect, especially in science and physical education. Since the last inspection the school library has been extensively refurbished, carpeted and restocked. There have been improvements in the provision of ICT. A twenty station ICT suite has been created since the last inspection and this is now linked to ten computers in the design and technology area with a fileserver providing a wider internal network access to three other areas. However, modem facilities are not fully available across the whole curriculum and the ratio of computers to students is well below the national average. A shortage of

computers within the modern foreign language, art and design and science areas hinders access to ICT facilities.

64. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The number of full time teachers has increased since the last inspection and there is now a better balance of those with youth and experience. All teachers are suitably qualified and most teachers teach their main subjects. Standards of work are not adversely affected where non-specialists take a few lessons in English and history. There is now a new teacher of music, which has successfully solved the problems associated with difficulties in recruiting music teachers since the last inspection, which led to a decline in standards. Teachers attend courses and conferences to good effect in helping them in their professional development and newly appointed staff, including those who are newly qualified, are closely helped by more experienced colleagues. Specific whole-school roles of the newly appointed four assistant heads are developing satisfactorily. Lesson observation has helped teachers to review and improve their performance. Classroom assistants give good support to the students with special educational needs. Technical, administrative, cleaning and catering staff all contribute to the smooth running of the school.

65. Accommodation is good and provides an atmosphere conducive to learning. It is well managed and organised, clean and free from litter and graffiti. Accommodation for most subjects is good and the reception area is welcoming. There are very good displays of students' work in the reception area and in classrooms, celebrating students' achievement. The sports pitches are good but liable to occasional flooding. Other facilities for physical education are good. The information and technology room is very good. The science laboratories have recently been refurbished and are large, spacious, airy and bright. Design and technology accommodation is good, especially the food technology and textile areas. The special educational needs room is a large, quiet and a comfortable area conducive to good concentration and work. A rolling programme of redecoration means that some areas are in a better state of decoration than others. There are good cloakroom facilities for students and most students have access to their own locker. This helps to keep the school clean and tidy. There is a toilet for the disabled and access to the ground floor for wheelchairs. The upper floors can be accessed with the use of a stair-climbing wheelchair. The local community makes good use of the accommodation, especially the swimming pool and other sporting facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Improve attainment in German and in music by:
 - Improving the timetable arrangements and allocation of time given to the teaching of music.
 - Ensuring that the new teachers in these subjects are supported fully by the senior management team in their drive to improve standards.(Paragraphs: 30, 132, 137, 138, 145)
- (2) Increase the contribution made by subjects across the curriculum to improve student's numeracy skills by:
 - Undertaking such additional training as necessary to ensure that all staff can teach numeracy skills through their subjects.
 - Planning more effectively to ensure all subjects incorporate numeracy teaching into their schemes of work.(Paragraphs: 101, 109, 114, 121, 138, 143, 151)
- (3) Improve the quality of information to parents in reports about the progress students make by:
 - Reporting more precisely how students are progressing in terms of National Curriculum levels and in what they know and understand.
 - Reporting the targets set for students and the progress being made towards those targets.
 - Presenting reports in a manner that gives sufficient space to all subjects to make fuller reports on students' progress.(Paragraphs: 51, 53, 87, 98, 122, 128, 146)
- (4) Improve attendance by:
 - Reducing the amount of authorised absence caused by students taking holidays during term-time.
 - Actively promoting and reinforcing good attendance patterns.
 - Recording attendance statistics more accurately in order to target areas for improvement.(Paragraphs: 17, 46, 54)

In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to:

- Meet fully the requirement relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship. (Paragraphs: 39, 61)
 - Attend to risk assessments and other health and safety concerns drawn to the attention of the school.
- (Paragraph: 48)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	98
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	30	50	12	1	0	0
Percentage	2	32	53	12	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y9
Number of students on the school's roll	356
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	52

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y9
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	73

English as an additional language

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

Student mobility in the last school year

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.3
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.07
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	64	58	122

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	39	52	48
	Girls	48	40	34
	Total	87	92	82
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	71 (79)	75 (72)	68 (68)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (29)	49 (55)	36 (34)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	35	45	51
	Girls	46	41	41
	Total	81	86	92
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (78)	71 (76)	75 (68)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	26 (30)	39 (56)	35 (39)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	350
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	4	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	22	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	22.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.75

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	136

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	69.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	22
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1 057 962
Total expenditure	1 051 622
Expenditure per student	2 954
Balance brought forward from previous year	(23 832)
Balance carried forward to next year	(17 492)

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.6

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	350
Number of questionnaires returned	93

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	42	3	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	65	30	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	46	3	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	49	14	0	7
The teaching is good.	57	40	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	27	1	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	20	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	69	26	3	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	82	17	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	76	21	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	79	20	1	0	0

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- In two thirds of lessons, teaching is either good or very good.
- The units of work are very well planned.
- There are good resources which are well used.
- Students with special educational needs are well supported.
- The use of ICT is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for extended, creative writing in Year 7.
- Target-setting for students needs to be more precise so that they know how to improve further.

67. When students enter the school, their standards in literacy are broadly in line with the national average. Students respond well to the good teaching and make good progress, achieving standards that are well above average at the end of Year 9. The literacy strategy has been introduced effectively and has had a positive effect upon teachers' planning and upon standards.

68. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds, the students' results were above average. Results were well above average in comparison with schools with students of similar backgrounds. Although the boys did better than boys nationally, there was a considerable gap between the performance of the boys and the girls. The school has worked hard to improve the performance of the boys; consequently, the results of the national tests for this year (as yet unconfirmed) show that there has been a great improvement, and the difference between the boys' and the girls' results is narrower than that found nationally. Results in English were in line with those in mathematics and better than results in science. The work seen during the inspection showed no discernible difference between the boys and the girls. Since the last inspection, standards have fluctuated, but over the past three years, the rate of improvement has been higher than nationally.

69. During the inspection, the standard of work seen was well above average, particularly in writing. This constitutes good achievement since students entered the school. Higher attaining students and students who have special educational needs also achieve as well as their peers in relation to their prior attainment.

70. Standards of speaking and listening are broadly average. Students of all levels of attainment have good listening skills. They listen well to the teacher when

the teacher is reading to them, and they easily recall details from the text, and are able to draw conclusions. Most students show an increasingly wide vocabulary, describing the characters in a book as 'gullible', or 'vulnerable', and students of all abilities express themselves with a satisfactory degree of clarity. For instance, in Year 8, a student with special educational needs gave a clear explanation of how paragraphs are used in writing. When students engage in informal conversation, their speech is articulate and fluent, but in more formal situations, it is less so. Many students enter for public speaking competitions and are very successful; when students give talks to the rest of the class, records show that they do well; but students do not seem to use these skills in everyday classroom activities.

71. Standards of reading are above average throughout the school. By the age of 14, students read a range of texts with understanding and insight. They have a good understanding of what they read, being able to recognise inferences and to draw conclusions. They are encouraged to read for pleasure and to share this with others, which they do enthusiastically. When given the opportunity, they read aloud confidently and with expression. They have a good knowledge about books and they recognise the effects of certain techniques that authors use. For instance, when reading a ghost story, they analyse how the author builds up tension and the effect of short sentences. Some students have weak reading skills on entry to the school, but they make good progress in improving their reading because of the good support and the effective teaching they receive.

72. Standards of writing are well above average. Literary essays are particularly well developed. By the end of Year 9, students have a good grasp of the conventions of writing this kind of essay. For instance, in a study of who was to blame for Macbeth's downfall, students use quotations aptly to support their comments. There is a very good range of writing in all years, but in Year 7, there is insufficient extended, creative writing, particularly for the middle and lower attaining students. Where it exists, it is very good, as, for instance, in a story written by a higher attaining student, "The Race up Rocky Mountain", which was well planned and sustained. Poetry is particularly strong in the school, and students produce some high quality work. A poem, 'The Flavours Fox Feast', written in Year 7, used both rhythm and rhyme successfully. Another poem, written by a student in Year 8, conjured up a very evocative picture of an empty football stadium. This was followed by a commentary on what he was trying to achieve in the poem. There were some wonderful ballads written by students in Year 9 on subjects as varied as 'Harry Potter', and 'The Oklahoma Bomber'. The work of higher attaining students is accurate and fluent, and shows a wide vocabulary. Middle and lower attainers' work is lively and imaginative, but often marred by basic spelling errors. A strong feature of their written work is the pride students take in presentation. Work is generally neat and writing is legible. They also make very good use of the computer to present and illustrate their work, often to a high standard.

73. Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. The English teachers are well informed of their needs, and plan accordingly, and students are well supported both within the classroom and with extra literacy lessons with a special needs teacher.

74. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. In two out of every three lessons it is either good or very good. Because students respond well to the effective teaching, learning is also good. Students show a good level of interest and pride in their work and their behaviour is often very good. This not only reflects credit on the students, but also on the way teachers enthuse and motivate them. A strength in the teaching is the very good subject knowledge that the teachers have. This means that their lessons are very well planned, and they give thorough coverage of the topics, building up students' skills and understanding step by step. Because teachers have high expectations, all students, including those who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, learn well. Teachers enable this by modifying work, or by giving tasks that are sufficiently open-ended to allow students to work at their own level. They offer a range of support materials which students can use to guide their writing if needed. During lessons, teachers continually offer support to students whilst they are working, by checking that they understand, or by helping them develop their thinking through carefully directed questioning. The marking of students' work is good. It is constructive and helpful, giving students a good knowledge of how to improve their work.

75. Students show positive attitudes in their lessons and these good attitudes to learning make a very important contribution to their achievement. Students' behaviour is generally very good, but there is a small minority of students, mainly boys, whose behaviour is immature and attention-seeking, and they are less inclined to work. Teachers generally manage these students very well, but in some cases, the teacher needs a wider range of strategies to manage students and limit the disruption they can cause. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. The result is an ethos in lessons where students expect to work hard and teachers are able to easily encourage them to their best efforts. A good climate for learning is engendered and students benefit by making good progress.

76. The curriculum is very well planned, with units of work designed to take into account the literacy strategy, giving a wide range of learning opportunities. The basic skills of literacy are well taught, and there is good provision for students with special educational needs. Good assessment procedures are effective in building a picture of what students can do, and what they need to improve. Students are set targets after assessment, although some of these are too general to be of real value to the student. Units of work are modified in the light of assessment results. A good example of this was the introduction of more topics designed to interest boys, using texts that they would find more interesting. This has had a marked effect upon their attainment. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities provided by members of the department, from theatre visits to lunchtime poetry clubs, all of which enhance the learning opportunities for the students. Many students are prepared well to participate in the Eskdale Festival. It is a tribute to the hard work of the staff and the students that they achieve a high degree of success in this and other competitions.

77. The head of department gives a clear direction for the subject with her very good leadership. The introduction of the literacy strategy has been well managed, and is having a positive effect upon standards. The department is well resourced and there is adequate access to computers to develop students' skills in information

technology. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good. Standards are higher, particularly of the boys; teaching has improved; the use of ICT is well planned and its use has greatly improved.

Drama

78. Drama is very well taught in the school. At the end of Year 9, students reach standards that are well above those expected for this age. They create drama with a high degree of conviction and confidence. They incorporate into their work techniques they have learned, such as freeze-framing, during which they show very good body control. They have a good knowledge of the technical language of the theatre, for instance, proscenium arch, thrust stage, theatre in the round. Students are developing the ability to evaluate their own and others' performance with sensitivity, and they work very well together in groups, concentrating well on their work. They enjoy drama greatly, evidenced by the large numbers of students who take part in the very successful productions each year.

Key Skills: Literacy

79. The strategies for teaching literacy skills are good overall. The contribution made by other subjects to the development of the key skills in literacy is at least satisfactory and in some cases good. There has been good progress so far in developing a strategy for the whole school, linked to the national framework for literacy, although the policy is not yet finalised. All teachers expect to plan for the development of literacy skills, and there is already some very good practice in this area. In science, for example, the precise literacy skills needed when looking for information are taught well. The development of speaking and listening is promoted well in subjects such as religious education and history through open-ended questions that encourage students to answer in detail and in good standard English. Students are encouraged to use technical vocabulary in most subjects, and this is aided in departments by word lists or glossaries. In design and technology, for instance, students use the correct names for tools, materials and processes. In graphics, they use words like 'outlining' 'rendering' and 'shading'. In ICT they speak in terms of 'input' and 'output' when programming a robot.

80. The skill of reading aloud is promoted in several subjects, for instance, in religious education where students read aloud extracts from the bible and from textbooks. In history, when students read from textbooks, the teacher gives clear guidance on reading with expression. In science, students develop the skill of reading for information. Because standards in reading are above average, students do not experience difficulty in the reading requirements of subjects. Where students do experience difficulty, worksheets and materials are modified.

81. Standards in writing are well above average. Several subjects contribute to the development of a range of writing skills. In history, for instance, students develop note-making skills as well as writing extended essays. There is appropriate emphasis on presentation, punctuation and spelling. In religious education, there is well-structured writing, evaluating evidence. Creative writing is encouraged through dramatised interpretations of religious events, or through writing press accounts. In

science, the department encourages free writing at times, such as in Year 7 when students write poems about living things. They encourage correct spelling of scientific vocabulary through regular spelling tests.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- Good quality teaching resulting in good achievement by students.
- Provision for students with special educational needs ensures they make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures and the use of assessment data to monitor students' progress.
- Further improvement is needed in longer term planning to develop the subject.
- Ensuring the contribution of other subjects to developing students' numeracy skills.

82. When students enter the school their standard in mathematics is average. Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9. Students achieve good standards overall and they achieve well in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding of mathematics. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. This is a key factor in ensuring the good quality of learning and the positive response of students. A wide variety of activities is provided, including the use of computers, and this has a clear impact on the level of achievement.

83. In the 2000 national tests, at the end of Year 9, results were well above average. They were well above the national average when compared with all schools and well above average when compared to similar schools. These results were similar to those in English and higher than in science. Except for 1998, when results fell, they have usually risen in line with national trends. The results represent good achievement in relation to students' attainment when they entered the school. Results in 2001 are similar to those in 2000. In both years, students performed better in the tests than their work through the year would suggest because they were well-prepared for the tests and showed a strong commitment to doing well.

84. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above average with students achieving well in relation to their standards on entering the school. Numeracy skills are satisfactory for the majority of students. By the end of Year 9 most students have made good progress with consolidating their number skills. Higher attaining students have a good understanding of rounding and estimating. Most students are able to handle numbers mentally with confidence, although the lowest attaining students still have difficulty with their tables. Higher attaining students, in Year 7, understand how to find rules for sequences of numbers and, in Year 8, are able to identify factors and prime numbers confidently. Algebraic

skills are developing well; by the end of Year 9 most students are able to simplify algebraic expressions and solve equations. Higher attaining students can solve simultaneous equations. In science, students are able to calculate accurately using formulae. Students' understanding of shape and space is satisfactory. Average attaining students have a good understanding of polygons and can use protractors confidently and accurately to measure angles. In geography students are able to use coordinates confidently in map work. Students make good progress in their data handling skills, for example average attaining students are able to use frequency tables and can calculate probabilities. Problem solving skills are developing well through investigational tasks; students can identify patterns and find rules.

85. The overall quality of teaching is good. On occasion, the quality of teaching is very good. The high quality teaching ensures that learning is good for students as they move through the school. Lesson planning is good; clear objectives are set for lessons and good links are made between lessons. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher used a mental activity involving counting forwards and backwards in halves, quarters and thirds to review what students had remembered from the previous lesson on fractions. All teachers have sound subject knowledge and are able to explain concepts clearly. They provide a good range of activities to help students learn effectively, including practical, mental and problem solving tasks. Computers are used effectively to support students' learning. For example, in an excellent Year 8 lesson with lower attaining students, the teacher used computer software well to develop students understanding of symmetry. Where teaching is least effective, the pace of lessons is slower and ineffective management of students leads to their making slower progress. In most lessons, however, teachers manage students well and set clear expectations with regard to behaviour. Questioning of students is good; students listen attentively and they are keen to answer. Good use is made of different tasks and resources to meet the individual needs of different students in classes in order to develop students' skills, knowledge, and understanding. Starter activities are being used well in most lessons to develop students' mental skills and their problem solving skills. Good feedback about the progress students are making during lessons ensures that they can see how well they are doing. Marking of students' work, however, does not always inform students well enough of what they need to do to improve. Good attention is given to literacy skills by the display of key words in classrooms. Teachers use homework well to consolidate students' skills and increase understanding. Support teachers are used very effectively in lessons. This ensures that students with special educational needs make good progress with their learning. Suitable challenge is provided for the more able students ensuring good progress for gifted and talented students.

86. Attitudes to learning are good. Students usually apply themselves well to their tasks and appear interested in what they are doing. When asked to work in groups, students cooperate well with each other. For example, Year 7 students worked quietly in groups to devise the least moves needed to reorganise the position of a group of frogs. In many books, work is not presented well enough. Diagrams and graphs are not drawn carefully enough, although work is nearly always dated and headed. Generally students behave well, but there are a small number of occasions where students do not behave as well as they should and this slows the progress of other students in the class.

87. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Further improvement is needed in longer term planning to develop the subject and in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching of mathematics. Schemes of work are in the process of change to fit in with the National Numeracy Strategy for Years 7,8 and 9. At the moment, starter activities are being used well in most lessons although the use of the plenary session to review learning is not yet used well enough. There is a clear commitment by all staff to maintaining the high standards already achieved. Appropriate priorities are identified in the subject's development plan although it lacks detail in how it is to be monitored and evaluated. The day-to-day assessment of students' work is good, but the procedures for assessing and reporting students' levels attainment as they move through the school do not provide sufficient information to monitor their progress. This area has recently been addressed and students in Year 9 now have much more precise and useful targets to guide their progress. The quality of reports is unsatisfactory; they do not provide appropriate information about what the students can do, cannot do, and need to improve in their work. Good provision is made for the progress of gifted and talented students by providing a GCSE statistics course in Year 8.

88. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the last inspection. Tasks are now well suited to students' needs and teachers now explain concepts well. The quality of presentation of work however is still not high enough and marking still does not provide sufficient comments about where improvement is necessary.

Key skills: numeracy

89. The contribution made by teaching in other subjects to developing students' numeracy skills is unsatisfactory. However, the school development plan outlines improvement to demonstrate how the school is addressing this in the current academic year. Some subjects are already making a positive contribution to this area of students' learning. For example, graphical skills are reinforced during lessons in science and, in geography students are regularly developing their use of graphical skills in project work. In design technology, science and art and design, teachers emphasise accurate measuring skills. The school needs to identify where teachers' need additional training to ensure that all subjects extend this good practice.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths

- The leadership of the department, the commitment of the teachers to raising standards of attainment, and the quality of teaching within the department.
- Good relationships between teachers and students.
- The awareness of teachers and students of health and safety issues.
- The raising of students' awareness of the effects of scientific experiment in the wider world outside school.

Areas for improvement

- The further development of the use of ICT within the laboratory
- Students and parents to be made more aware of National Curriculum levels both within lessons and written reports.

90. Levels of attainment are above the national average at the end of Year 9. Students' achievements, in relation to their standards on entry to the school, are good. These standards are achieved because the quality of teaching is mainly good, and on occasions very good. This in turn has led to the quality of learning and students' attitudes to the subject being good. This is good improvement since the last inspection when levels were in line with national standards.

91. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds, the students' results were above the national average. The test results were well above average in comparison with schools with students of similar backgrounds. This represents good achievement for students as they progressed through Years 7 to 9. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Students did not do as well in science as they did in English and mathematics. Results over the past three years have been consistently above the national average. In the reported results for 2001 the proportion of students working at, or above, the national average was maintained, but the proportion achieving the highest levels was lower than in 2000.

92. During the inspection, standards of work seen were above average. On entry to the school, levels of attainment in science are broadly average. Students in Year 7 know that some features of living things are inherited from parents, and that others are inherited from the environment. Studying the classification of animals, students show care and respect for a range of living creatures in the laboratory, including hamsters, mice, lizard, caterpillars and snails. Students accurately record their observations both scientifically, and by using poetry. They are able to give examples of vertebrate groups. There is evidence of poor spelling by students of scientific words both in exercise books and displayed work. However, to assist the development of their literacy skills, students complete their own scientific vocabulary notebook, have spelling tests of scientific words, on occasions read text to fellow students and can observe key words displayed within the laboratory.

93. Year 8 students safely, and correctly, use Bunsen burners as they create a compound. Higher attaining students are able to use formula equations to explain their findings. Middle attaining students watch short extracts of a video, and independently, make relevant notes. Lower attaining students know the differences between atoms, elements and compounds and understand simple word equations. Higher attaining students in Year 9, building upon previous work, understand the importance of biomass and can competently draw comparative graphs, with minimum support, to illustrate the concentration of carbon dioxide and the rate of photosynthesis in different light. They are able to relate their findings to the improvement of food production in third-world countries. They are able to prepare slides, correctly use microscopes, and can define vascular bundles and xylem. Lower attaining students are familiar with the structure and functions of different root systems and are able to prepare slides to observe stomata.

94. Students with special educational needs make good progress, more so where they receive support from teacher assistants, but otherwise because teachers prepare appropriate lesson material to suit their needs. Teachers' lesson planning indicates an awareness of the content of individual education plans. Students respond to the often good and very good teaching in the department, and all students make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

95. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and this leads to good quality learning. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, mainly good and on occasion very good. Features of the good teaching include the teachers' good subject knowledge, and effective planning that meets the needs of the class. Good classroom management skills and a planned well-managed diversity of activities, often including a demonstration by teachers or investigation by students, result in good learning. There is a good pace to lessons and both higher and lower attaining students are challenged to produce high standards. Students are given the opportunity to work independently and respond well to these opportunities. Teachers do not consistently share lesson objectives with students, nor do they always review the progress made during a lesson. Where these approaches are followed, the lessons have greater focus and are more effective. Homework is used effectively to build upon what students have learned and also to encourage them to discover further information. A scrutiny of previous work showed some inconsistency in teachers' marking and the presentation of work by students. However, a now stable specialist staff has addressed these matters and improvements have taken place. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students are aware of health and safety issues when performing investigative activities and act responsibly when working in groups.

96. The teaching of literacy skills is good. Teachers emphasise the use of scientific vocabulary and widen students' learning through comprehension of scientific texts. For example, encouragement to record the observation of creatures by the use of poetry and the comprehension of scientific newspaper articles challenges students' literacy skills and extends higher attainers. Currently the provision of ICT is inadequate and has not allowed the introduction of data logging and control. The use of ICT is insufficient in all years. The teaching of numeracy skills is good.

97. Students' behaviour is mainly good and on occasions very good. Students show good attitudes in their lessons and these attitudes to learning make an important contribution to their achievement. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions, particularly when discussing health and safety matters, such as the correct usage of a Bunsen burner in Year 8. They raise hands when answering questions and do not call out. Any potentially boisterous behaviour by an individual student is controlled by the good classroom management skills of the teacher and does not affect standards adversely. Students act responsibly as they collect, use and return apparatus. They work collaboratively when necessary. Relationships between students and, also, with their teachers are good. Teachers show a detailed knowledge of their students and a caring attitude towards them.

98. The leadership of the department, and the commitment of the teachers to raising standards of attainment and the quality of teaching are strengths of the department. The schemes of work are satisfactory and effective assessment procedures are in place. More information about National Curriculum levels should be given both to students and parents to inform more precise target setting. The planned creation of a portfolio of work will assist the department in standardising its work. There has been a good response to the issues raised at the last inspection. Standards have risen including improvements in levels of literacy in relation to spelling and the use of scientific vocabulary. Accommodation issues have been addressed and two refurbished laboratories now provide clean, bright, spacious teaching areas with attractive wall displays.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Students receive very good teaching.
- Students develop very good attitudes and behave very well.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to students' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to guide planning of the curriculum.
- The quality of subject reports to parents.
- The use ICT in art and design lessons.

99. When students enter the school their skills in art and design are below average. They draw naively, make good attempts at shape and pattern, but are less successful in representing tone and texture. They understand about mixing paint to gain different colours but painting skills are weak. Their knowledge of art and artists is thin. Students recognise some of the works of famous artists, such as Vincent Van Gogh, but know little of his life. By the end of Year 9, students' levels of attainment are average. This demonstrates good improvement over the three years in school and from the last inspection, when standards were judged to be lower than average.

Students' attitudes to the subject are very good and the management and teaching of art and design have improved since the last inspection.

100. The results of teachers' assessments in Years 2000 and 2001 show that the percentage of students attaining levels five and six is slightly lower than that seen nationally for schools of similar type, and that the girls' attainment is higher than that of the boys. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are broadly average. Overall, students make good progress over the three years in school and achieve well. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment. Students' drawing skills are good. This was evident during lessons in Years 8 and 9 when students drew sunflowers and a range of tribal masks, showing fine details and texture, but their imaginative drawings are weak. Drawings in sketchbooks are very varied. Some of the younger and the lower attaining students, mainly boys, do not spend enough time on their homework and their results are scrappy. Printing is good. Students in Years 7 and 8 understand how to transfer simple drawings into prints and the higher attaining students use their first simple attempts to make effective repeat patterns. Painting in general is not as good as drawing, as most students cannot represent tone successfully when using paint, but most students mix colours successfully and are careful when using brushes. Textile work is very good. For example, a display of animal heads made by students in Year 9, shows very good use of appropriately textured materials and well-finished products. Clay work is satisfactory. Students work with clay and modelling materials and produce small, but well detailed and carefully coloured examples of, for example, tiles and insects. No clay work can be fired as the kiln is irreparable and a replacement has not been ordered. Although many students use home computers to search for information about art and artists, there is little work in lessons in connection with ICT. Their knowledge of the work of some famous artists such as Escher, Monet, Mondrian and Klimt and of primitive people around the world is good.

101. The quality of teaching in art and design is very good and this ensures that pupils make good progress from a below average base on entry to the school. Teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and plan and prepare lessons carefully to stimulate and interest the students. For example, in Year 9, students learned about the origin and use of tribal masks and examined and compared real artefacts from a variety of different countries and cultures. They discovered about distortion and worked out why masks are often gruesome. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is successfully passed on to the students. They demonstrate competently and use correct language to increase students' confidence and extend their vocabularies. Lessons usually begin with some form of recapitulation, to focus students' attention and ensure they understand what they have to do. Students are given information and instruction clearly and effectively and have sufficient time for their own practical work. Individual help during lessons serves to encourage the less-confident students, helps those who are struggling and stretches the higher attaining ones. At the end of lessons, teachers appraise the work accurately and give homework to extend the topic. The teaching of basic skills is good overall, for example in improving literacy through the use of art-specific terminology, but needs to be planned more formally to ensure that numeracy skills

are developed fully. Teachers mark all pieces of work conscientiously and add comments to help students to improve the quality of their work.

102. Students have very good attitudes to art and design. They appear keen to learn and listen and watch attentively, especially during formal work at the beginning and end of lessons. They settle to work cheerfully, concentrate and try hard. Behaviour is very good. Students are keen to communicate, obey instructions and speak politely to the teacher. Students are responsible for setting out their own work areas and for storing it safely. They work cleanly and clear away without fuss. Most students get on well together and many of them show admiration for others' efforts. All these factors combine to ensure that very good learning results from the very good teaching that students receive. Most students are justifiably proud of their efforts and are confident in showing them to adults for approval.

103. Leadership is good and the art and design department has made good progress since the last inspection. A new head of department has been appointed who has made a significant impact on the standards of work. The scheme of work has been rewritten, assessment procedures have improved, accommodation has been rearranged and better quality resources have been purchased. Students now have opportunities to visit art galleries and exhibitions and work in conjunction with real artists, which considerably add to students' cultural education. Some students have attained success in national competitions. The development plan is realistic and aims to celebrate and improve art and design in general and strengthen links with the nearby college. Display in school is very good. The curriculum follows the requirements of the national curriculum. The time allocated to the subject is below recommendations, which explains why very good teaching and learning still result in good achievement and average attainment. The use of ICT to extend the activities in art and design lessons is insufficient. The use of assessment to guide curriculum planning and to report on students' progress needs further development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- A good curriculum that interests, motivates and challenges the students.
- The very positive attitudes of the students to their work.
- Very good accommodation and facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures to make greater use of National Curriculum levels.
- The more systematic development of design skills.
- The further development and use of ICT in all areas of the subject.

104. Teachers' assessments in 2000 show that standards of attainment are broadly average at the end of Year 9. The teacher assessments for 2001 indicate similar levels of attainment. However, the work seen during the inspection shows that standards are currently above average and that teachers' assessments have erred too far on the side of caution. Students' achievements in relation to their earlier learning are good in all years. The quality of teaching of design and technology is always good and often very good. This is a major factor in the quality of learning and progress made by the students, who respond with high levels of concentration, interest and enthusiasm to the tasks set. All areas of weakness identified in the last inspection report have been effectively dealt with and improvement has been good.

105. In the work seen in the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is above average. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment as many students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment in design and technology below the average. The majority of students have skills in making objects using a range of materials that are above the national average by the end of Year 9. For many students their design skills are less well developed but there are examples of high quality work. For example, in a Year 8 textiles lesson, the students had researched commercial logos and symbols and were identifying the features of these, prior to developing criteria for their own designs. Graphical skills are well developed for the middle and higher attaining students. The highest attaining students have a secure grasp of subject knowledge, understanding and vocabulary. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs have greater difficulty with design skills but their making skills are better developed. Boys and girls are attaining at similar levels.

106. Students' skills in making objects develop very well in all years. Throughout the school the students handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing confidence, accuracy and skill, and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Most students make good progress with their graphical skills, using a widening range of techniques and drawing and projection methods to communicate, record, refine and present their design ideas. Design skills also progress, but at a slightly slower rate than the other aspects of the subject for all but the highest attaining students. This area requires more specific development and needs to be emphasised more in the curriculum across the different aspects of design and technology across all years.

107. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good and is a strength of the department. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills, and this contributes to the high levels of work produced by the students. They set tasks and use projects that challenge the students and have high expectations of the work they produce. In the lessons observed, the teachers used a range of methods and learning activities appropriate to the students' levels of attainment. For example, in a Year 9 food technology class, students were investigating and researching a range of pastry mixes for flan cases. The teacher gave a clear introduction to the task, including questioning to test earlier learning, set high expectations of the work and then organised the students to undertake the practical

work, some as individuals, others in pairs. The teacher had prepared all the ingredients so that the students could concentrate on the investigation. The teacher then provided individual support, advising, ensuring safe working and giving feedback to aid progress. Such teaching approaches ensured that students worked hard and showed high levels of interest in the tasks set, leading to good productivity in lessons and good learning. In some lessons the teachers shared the aims of the lesson with the students so they were aware of what they should achieve by the end, but this was not a consistent practice.

108. The students have very positive attitudes to their work in design and technology. They listen attentively to their teachers' explanations and demonstrations, and respond readily to their questions. They concentrate well and are very interested in the tasks set. The students respect the equipment and resources provided for their use. Relationships are very good and students collaborate very effectively when working in pairs and groups. Routines are well established and students' behaviour is very good which ensures a very good working atmosphere in lessons and good learning on the part of students.

109. The leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department gives a good lead to his team and manages the department effectively. Accommodation for the subject is very good and the teachers make a well qualified, experienced team. These factors make a significant contribution to the standards achieved by the students. The curriculum has good breadth, interests and motivates the students and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, greater attention should be given to the systematic development of design skills alongside those of making. The department is now in a strong position to develop further its use of ICT as better facilities are made available in the subject. The planned teaching of literacy and numeracy skills needs more attention.

110. The last inspection report identified a number issues all of which have been successfully tackled. The standard of graphical work is now at the national average and there is strong evidence in the students' folders of independent research. The amount of teacher direction in design activity has reduced and they provide good stimulus for the students to develop their own design ideas. The health and safety issue has been resolved. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been good.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- The teachers' knowledge and understanding, planning, teaching methods and use of resources.
- Students' very good behaviour.
- Very good communication between staff in the department.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment practice.

111. When students enter the school their knowledge and understanding in geography are below average. They know about their own locality, but are unsure of how it compares with other areas of the country. Map skills are weak. Most students have travelled abroad and know a little about other countries, mainly in Europe, but they have very little understanding of how the climate and geographical locations affect peoples' lives and living conditions. Most students have a good general knowledge of weather, environmental damage and natural disasters. By the end of Year 9, students' levels of attainment are average. This demonstrates good achievement over the three years in school and matches the last inspection findings. Students' attitudes to the subject are good and the use of ICT for research has improved since the last inspection.

112. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated over the past three years, but assess the proportion of students attaining levels five and beyond to be well above average. This is not born out by the work seen during the inspection, which shows that standards of the current Year 9 students are average. At the start of Year 7, students become familiar with directions and reading and drawing maps. In Year 8, they can interpret evidence, and present it in different forms such as graphs and charts and use it effectively in presenting project work on topics such as British National Parks, tourism in Europe and Kenyan holidays. These studies help students' cultural education by including work on houses, customs, food and religion. Students who are identified as being gifted and talented have scope within the projects to make extended studies and show good skill in presentation. Students know about factors affecting living and working conditions, such as the location of towns and factories and the higher attaining students can work out which conditions are best for growing different crops and raising livestock. By the end of Year 9, students understand some facts about world development and natural disasters, such as population concerns, migration and earthquakes and why some volcanoes erupt. Most students can explain how humans and natural phenomena change the environment and say what improvements or otherwise have occurred.

113. Most students have opportunities to visit the local industrial estate and outdoor centres to learn about, for example, waste and reclamation. However, students are relatively unskilled in geographical investigation. Students' books show

that they all complete a reasonable amount of work. The higher attaining students' work is better presented and fuller in detail than that from the lower attaining students and from those with special educational needs, whose lower levels of literacy adversely affect their reading, writing and levels of understanding. Most students use computers at school to search the Internet and CD-ROMs for information, but only those who have computers at home use them for word processing and illustration. Overall, students make good progress over the three years in school and achieve well in relation to their starting points on entering the school.

114. The quality of teaching in geography is good and leads to good learning. The teachers of geography have very good subject knowledge and communicate correct information to the students. Lesson planning is thorough. Teachers select and use appropriate resources to ensure students have appropriate starting points for their levels of understanding and that they are interested and motivated by the tasks. This ensures that students learn well and this quality of learning is enhanced because teachers help pupils effectively in their development of literacy skills. For example, they use correct terms to add to students' vocabularies and they mark work carefully, which also informs students of their attainment or need for improvement. Further work is needed to ensure a more effective, planned contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Lessons usually proceed as planned and as teachers are firm and fair, no time is wasted on gaining order and discipline. The lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, benefit from the brief reviews at the start of lessons, which help them to focus their attention on work learned previously and the discussions at the end help them to consolidate the work they have done during the lesson. Homework complements the class work and is marked and returned promptly, so students are not left in doubt about their efforts. Teachers value students' work and display it prominently in the classrooms.

115. Students have good attitudes to geography. They are very keen to communicate, speak politely to the teachers and are good listeners. The higher attaining students are the ones most likely to ask questions instead of merely answering them. Most students enjoy the varied tasks given to them during lessons and are co-operative when working in pairs or groups. Behaviour is very good and students appear keen to work. They settle to tasks speedily, concentrate and try hard. Owing to their low levels of literacy and numeracy, the lower attaining students find understanding and interpretation of data in geography rather difficult, but they all make good efforts to do their best.

116. Leadership is good and the geography department has made good progress since the last inspection. The new head of department has only been in post for two weeks but has already made some changes and improvements. There is a new scheme of work for students in Year 7 and there are plans to improve the schemes of work for Years 8 and 9. Teachers in the department work very well together as a team. The curriculum follows the requirements of the National Curriculum and the system of assessment is in place, but the accuracy of assessment needs further attention. The development plan is good and includes plans to include more ICT in topics and improve fieldwork.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

Strengths

- Students' attainment in the skills of historical analysis.
- The quality of teaching.
- Students' keen interest in the subject.

Areas for improvement

- More provision to extend learning for high attaining and gifted and talented students.
- The quality of reports to parents.

117. When students enter the school their level of attainment in history is broadly average. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, levels of attainment are above average. Work seen during the inspection confirms these judgements. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be average. Students' achievements in relation to their earlier learning are good. The quality of teaching is good and is a major factor in the quality of learning and progress made by the students. They respond with interest and enthusiasm in the subject. Areas requiring attention, identified in the last inspection report have been successfully tackled and improvement has been good.

118. By Year 9, students' knowledge and understanding of history is above the national average. They have good skills in analysis. They can select and examine the evidence presented and evaluate the events studied. In Year 7 they look at the evidence, both for and against, to establish the wisdom of the actions and nature of the problems facing William the Conqueror after the Battle of Hastings. In Year 8 students study Elizabeth's execution of Mary Queen of Scots to establish whether this was justified or necessary. In some instances, higher attaining students are not given access to the complexities of an historical situation to make the basis of their analysis more challenging. In Year 9 students understand the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution on Victorian England. They gain a good knowledge of the opinions held by people in Victorian times. They have a good understanding of how history is made.

119. All students, including students with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Students with special educational needs get appropriate support in lessons. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls. Despite the lack of challenging evidence presented to high attaining students they too make good progress. They show very good understanding by posing crucial questions about the nature of the evidence presented to them and question how this is to be interpreted. For example, they examined carefully and effectively the questions relating to who wrote the biblical accounts of creation and where did these accounts originate?

120. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The teachers have good class-management skills and maintain discipline with apparent ease. This enables the students to concentrate seriously on their work. Teachers have a good knowledge of individual students and encourage everyone to participate in discussion. They have good knowledge of the subject and effectively supplement the content of textbooks. There are some excellent features in many lessons particularly in the way the teacher makes the subject lively, interesting and relevant to the students. Students are involved in the presentation of the facts and ideas, for example, by representing either the supporters of Elizabeth 1 or Mary Queen of Scots. Lessons are well planned in

interesting short stages. They are well structured so that the overall aims of the lesson are achieved and students can see their own progress within lessons. Teachers mark the work closely so that the students know what they have to do to improve. Students' evident enjoyment of the subject is directly related to this good teaching. They are attentive to the teacher. They are alert and keen and ask and answer questions appropriately.

121. Although there was no use of ICT seen during the inspection students are taken to the ICT suite for specific lessons where they use the computers for research and writing. This extends their knowledge and enables them to do independent study. There is no specific promotion of numeracy within lessons apart from drawing attention to dates and the differences in times studied. History supports students' literacy skills as they are taught to read carefully for meaning. There is good attention given to extending students' vocabulary and to writing in correct English. Key words are displayed and attention is given to spelling and punctuation.

122. The subject is well led and managed and there has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. Planning is good. There is an improvement in standards since the last inspection. Provision for students with special educational needs has also improved. New, good quality, illustrated textbooks have been purchased. Visits abroad are used to enhance students' cultural awareness. Annual reports of students' progress to parents are unsatisfactory. They do not give enough information on students' progress in history, nor do they indicate how students can improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Consistently good quality teaching.
- A broad, challenging curriculum.
- The students have very positive attitudes to the work presented to them.
- The very good accommodation provided for the teaching of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The time available for the ICT course in Years 7 to 9, in order to ensure that students experience greater depth and opportunity to consolidate their learning.
- Linking the assessment system more closely to the National Curriculum levels and including information from students' use of ICT in other subjects.

123. Levels of attainment are in line with the national average at the end of Year 9, which represents good achievement in relation to students' starting points in Year 7. Standards are broadly similar to those at the last inspection but the issues identified at that time concerning aspects of the National Curriculum being underdeveloped have been successfully tackled. In addition the use of ICT by subjects across the

curriculum has been increased. The quality of teaching on the ICT courses is at least good and sometimes very good. Overall, this represents good improvement since the last inspection.

124. When students enter the school, their ICT skills are below the national average. By the end of Year 9, standards of work seen during the inspection show that good progress has been made by the majority of students and their achievement is good. Levels of attainment are at the national average for the middle and higher attaining girls and boys. Over the three years of the ICT course, most students develop secure basic procedures and their work shows a growing knowledge and understanding of a range of software and its application to a range of tasks and activities. For example in a Year 8 class, the students had been provided with a database by the teacher and were set a range of tasks that required them to search, edit and modify information and add further data, using the on-screen menus, toolbars and icons. The students develop a sense of audience for their work and presentations over time, and are able to combine information from different sources. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs still need support with basic procedures to make progress in their work and they do not have a secure grasp of the technical vocabulary of the subject.

125. The quality of learning and rate of progress are good in all years. From a low baseline on entry to the school, students develop skills rapidly and quickly gain knowledge and confidence in using the computer, the software, the keyboard and mouse. They apply these skills to a variety of tasks and work with high levels of interest and concentration. The increasing use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum is enabling students to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in a wider range of contexts and contributes to their overall learning and progress. The highest attaining students are able to work with good levels of independence and enjoy the challenges of the tasks set. The lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

126. The quality of teaching is consistently good and is a major strength. The teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and effectively explain the skills required for the students to use the computer and software. The tasks set are appropriate and challenging and fully involve the students. For example in a Year 9 lesson on control, the class of higher attaining students were expected to build a sequence of instructions on screen and then download them to a robot to turn wheels and switch on lights. They accomplished this and went on to modify the sequences and develop them to meet more demanding criteria. Lesson planning is good and meets the needs of students of all levels of attainment. The resources provided to support the learning are very good. The teachers have precise lesson objectives but do not always share them with the students or undertake an end of lesson review of the progress made. Where teachers do follow this process, the quality of students' learning is better and they are more involved in the lesson. Explanations are clear and questioning is used well to check and consolidate the learning. Classroom management and organisation are good and routines well established. Very good individual support is given to students, designed to meet their specific needs, and this often includes detailed feedback to aid progress.

127. The students have very positive attitudes towards the subject. Behaviour is very good and the level of concentration and commitment to work is high. As a result, students listen carefully to teachers' explanations and many students are keen to respond to their teachers' questions. This leads to very good learning. Relationships between the students and with the teacher are also very good. The students show great respect for the equipment and resources provided for their use.

128. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is very good and improvement since the last inspection has been good. The coordinator has a clear vision for the further development of ICT across the school. For example: the need has been identified to increase the level of facilities available to create more access, and to ensure that other subjects integrate ICT into their schemes of work and teach it for the benefit all students. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the allocation of time in each year does limit the depth to which the students can take their work, although this can in part be offset as the level of cross curriculum use of ICT increases. The assessment scheme meets statutory requirements but does not make use of the National Curriculum levels as part of the ongoing assessment of students' work, or reporting to parents. Nor does it take full account of the use of ICT in other subjects.

Key Skills: ICT

129. All students have a taught course in ICT in all Years from 7 to 9, with each student having one teaching period a week for a term in each year. Within these lessons the majority of students gain levels of skill, knowledge and understanding in line with the standards expected for their age. However, the restrictions of the time allocated mean that the depth of study is limited to ensure that students experience enough breadth of study. The majority of other subjects in the school curriculum now use ICT to varying degrees to extend the learning of the students, and are moving forward to meet the requirement that all subjects to use the key skill of ICT. Staff are currently being trained to meet this objective. Access to the central facilities is good, with the ICT suite available for booking for a very high proportion of periods each day. A second, but smaller suite of computers in the design and technology area, is also available for a good number of lessons in the week.

130. Cross-curricular use of ICT gives students opportunities to use and develop their skills in a range of contexts. For example in English, students use word processing and desk top publishing to create news articles and in Year 9 produce lurid poems on 'Hell Broth' alongside their work on Macbeth, using "Clip art" illustrations to enhance their work. In mathematics, Year 8 students use Logo effectively to draw symmetrical shapes, and in design and technology a Year 9 class used two-dimensional design software well to produce layouts for a board game. In other areas of the curriculum, including, history, art and design, geography, religious education, modern foreign languages and science, subjects use the internet and CD-ROMS for research, and most of these subjects also use word processing to extend students' experiences of ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The quality of provision in French and German is good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching in both languages is good and students now learn well as a result.
- Most students now have positive attitudes to learning a foreign language, and their behaviour in class is good.
- Leadership in both languages is clear-sighted and committed to raising standards.
- The quality of accommodation makes a very good impact on learning.

Areas for improvement

- The raising of attainment in German.
- The attitudes of some students in Years 8 and 9 to German need to improve further.
- Students have too few opportunities to read freely in the foreign language or use ICT.
- Students are not sufficiently aware of their National Curriculum levels or of what they need to do to achieve a higher level.

131. Levels of attainment in French are in line with the average at the end of Year 9. This represents satisfactory achievement for the majority of students. Attainment in German at the same stage is below average and students are still underachieving in this subject. Recent effective teaching in both languages is beginning to reap positive benefits in students' learning and their attitudes at all levels. Students beginning a foreign language have made strong progress in the short time since they started. In most important respects the department has made good improvements since the previous inspection.

132. Work seen during the inspection, both in class and from consideration of students' written work, shows that standards in French are in line with the national average. Higher attaining students are capable of writing freely about themselves and their family situation with a degree of accuracy. So far, however, there are no signs of a confident use of tenses that allow students to describe past events and future plans. Students' facility in speaking French shows good attention to accent and pronunciation. Students who are average in their attainment have sound understanding of their teacher's French spoken at near native speed. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, can give key information about themselves in well-pronounced French, and respond appropriately to basic instructions in the language. In speaking and listening boys and girls perform equally well, though in writing girls are generally more proficient at manipulating language accurately. Students now achieve standards in French that are appropriate to their capabilities. Consistently strong teaching since the start of this academic year is now promoting a good rate of progress among all students.

133. In German, standards of attainment have declined in past years to the extent that they are currently below the national average in Years 8 and 9. Many students in these two years are accordingly achieving standards below their capacities. For example, the written work of higher attainers shows little evidence of a grasp of German grammar or an ability to form new sentences on the basis of previous knowledge. Few students can speak in complete sentences and many have difficulties in understanding spoken German. Strong new teaching since the start of this school year is already beginning to reverse this decline. Beginners in Year 7 are achieving well within their capacity and all students, including those with special needs, are capable of greeting and exchanging simple information about themselves in German. In both French and German reading is less developed than the other three language skills of speaking, listening and writing because students have too little opportunity to read freely for enjoyment.

134. The teaching of French is good. Teachers are proficient speakers of French and generally use the language in the classroom as the principal means of communication. As a result students learn over time to listen carefully and reproduce accurately the sounds they hear. Progress in speaking and listening skills is therefore swift and effortless. In the best lessons there is real challenge and rigour with a strong insistence on accurate pronunciation and high standards of behaviour. Lessons start crisply with a clear statement of what students will be learning, and they end in a quiet orderly manner. This creates conditions in which students learn well and give of their best. In one Year 7 French lesson, for example, students learnt several new words in French for classroom objects and by the end of the lesson were able to say them confidently and with a good French accent. The teacher skilfully planned activities to give students a variety of opportunities to practise the new words in different contexts.

135. The teaching of German is also good and explains the more consistent progress students are beginning to make. High expectations and rigorous management ensure that students learn in a stable ordered environment and are kept busily occupied with work that is both challenging and enjoyable. Imaginative and often colourful use is made of methods, resources and materials to stimulate interest and offer good opportunities to students for rehearsing new points of language. Competitive games, for example, are often used to consolidate new words recently introduced. The effect of this is to give students the chance to practise this language and thus learn it in an enjoyable context. The teaching of students with special educational needs is appropriate and sensitive, using a variety of methods to keep students productively occupied. In a Year 9 German lesson, for example, the teacher's enthusiasm combined with a well planned series of engaging tasks to ensure that all students, including some with behavioural problems, remained interested and did not lose concentration, even at the end of a sixty minute period. One boy remarked that he was at last beginning to understand and enjoy German.

136. The teaching of both languages makes a sound contribution to students' learning of basic skills, such as the use of dictionaries and the careful presentation of work through word-processing, seen in the work is on display in the classrooms. Beyond this, however, there is little use of ICT for the teaching of languages and much scope remains for motivating students further through the possibilities offered

by language-learning software. The marking of students' work is regular and encouraging, but is not linked to National Curriculum levels and does not give students sufficient awareness of what they need to do to improve and achieve a higher level.

137. Students respond very positively to this engaging and well-managed teaching in both French and German. They listen attentively, answer questions eagerly, concentrate well and, when given the opportunity in such activities as pair work and class surveys, they cooperate with each other and show that they can be trusted to work independently. Students have a respectful relationship with their teachers and are willingly rising to the challenges posed by energetic new teaching. Some older students are still lacking motivation in German and recognise that they have underachieved in the past. Comments by students in Year 9, however, indicate that their attitudes are changing and they feel they are making progress. Behaviour overall is very good.

138. The heads of French and German are very new to their posts and have much to do in order to put their subjects on a stable well-managed footing. In time, new policies and schemes of work will need to be written and their departments equipped to bring them up to date. Policies that formalise the contribution made by the subjects to developing pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy need to be established. The teachers have shown vision and commitment in making their first priority the raising of standards and the changing of attitudes within the classroom. In this they have received excellent support from the school's management, which needs to continue to assist the process. Accommodation is spacious and very well appointed. Teachers have made the most of it by mounting some very good displays in classrooms and corridors.

139. Since the previous inspection the provision for modern foreign languages has improved significantly. Teaching is now consistently good in both subjects and, as a result, students' learning and attitudes have improved. The reservations in the previous report relating to provision for students with special educational needs and the low allocation of time to languages teaching no longer apply. The two departments are very well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The appointment of a newly trained subject specialist.
- A very good start on the production of well-planned new policies and schemes of work.
- The acquisition of new computers and relevant software to enrich the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- To raise standards of attainment.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To offer challenging opportunities to the talented young musicians in the school, particularly in Year 7.• To ensure the teaching of the full National Curriculum in music. |
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140. Levels of attainment are below average at the end of Year 9. This is because a succession of three appointments since the last inspection has resulted in a lack of continuity across Years 7 to 9. As a result, no structured specialist curriculum has been developed and students' achievements were unsatisfactory. Until now, modules of music teaching have been self-contained with little evidence of reinforcement and re-emphasis upon musical literacy and skills, and little or no continuity. This largely accounts for the drop in standards of attainment. The newly qualified teacher, in only her third week of teaching, has already taken steps to solve these problems and to develop strategies for raising standards. The quality of teaching is now good, and this is clearly contributing to at least satisfactory achievement in lessons. However, a background of past inconsistent teaching of the curriculum means that attainment is currently below average because students have been underachieving in their earlier years.

141. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards overall are currently below average and students have been under-achieving. A scrutiny of work covered during the previous three years confirms this, and does not concur with the last Key Stage 3 assessments, which described most students as performing well. By the age of 14, students have a basic knowledge of how to use keyboards. The majority have a poor awareness of even the most elementary music literacy, and this restricts them in both composition and performance. Most cannot read the treble clef, do not know where to find notes on the keyboards and do not understand time signatures or accidentals. Two Year 9 students, for example, trying to learn a melody in D major, did not know where either F# or C# were on the keyboard. Very many Year 9 students did not know that the right hand plays melodies and the left hand plays chords in two-part work, even though they were attempting two-part work in a lesson. In classes where students have individual instrumental tuition, and where the teacher provides tasks of different degrees of challenge, standards can occasionally be good. A Year 8 class of middle attaining students for example, performed a canon in six parts, based on the Pachelbel canon, with considerable accomplishment at the end of one lesson.

142. The teacher has had little time to meet the needs of talented students, and those who have special needs. However, in lessons observed there was evidence of different tasks being set which were appropriate to the needs of students having special needs. The fifty-strong, enthusiastic young musicians in the school orchestra are appropriately extended through their weekly rehearsals. One boy in Year 9, who has obvious great musical talent, not only made very good progress in a practical lesson, but he was also able to confidently help and guide other students with whom he was working. No difference was observed in the attainment of boys and girls. It is good that the teacher particularly encourages the nine boys in the school orchestra to attend rehearsals, and is planning to make extra provision for them by forming a brass band.

143. The overall quality of teaching is now good and students are achieving satisfactorily within individual lessons. Lessons are carefully prepared, with set tasks taking into account individual students' abilities. The teacher has a secure, specialist knowledge of how to teach music effectively. The use of computers in the department makes a sound contribution to students' developing musical skills. There are, as yet no planned opportunities for improving students' numeracy or literacy skills through music, though students' listening skills are already good. Musical examples played to classes are well chosen, and attract students' interest to the subject. Excerpts, for example, were played of different pop music versions of the Pachelbel canon in Year 9 lessons, together with the original; this really appealed to the students. Pacing, and the variety of activities in lessons, are good. Class management is largely effective, especially with the few boisterous lower attaining students who tend to shout out comments in class discussion out of turn. Practical work in pairs is assessed during lessons, but where too long is given to one particular pair of students, others in the room soon become distracted.

144. At the time of the inspection, the teacher used lessons to endeavour to discover what the students know, and what they can do: The teacher's expectations were rather high, which led to difficulties, but the process was required, and was entirely appropriate. Music technology is used effectively for composition and performance. Two new computers have been ordered for the department, together with appropriate software, and the teacher is confident in the use of this technology. Work with the computers will be integrated into classroom practical activities, and this should contribute to raising standards.

145. The quality of teaching contributes positively to the quality of students' learning. The practice of insisting upon paired or group performances at the end of practical lessons keeps students on target, and ensures progress. Higher attaining students usually make good progress and achieve well both over modules, and within lessons. Other students make satisfactory progress, particularly when tasks are appropriate, and these students are achieving satisfactorily. Higher attaining students generally have good attitudes to their work and behave very well, and this contributes to the progress they make. Other students work satisfactorily. All enjoy using the keyboards. Most work effectively in pairs, and help each other. They listen attentively to the teacher, and sensitively to each other when performances are taking place.

146. The newly appointed teacher has made substantial in-roads into the large task ahead and in doing so has demonstrated that there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There are now good strategies in place to secure higher standards. At this early stage in the new school year, much has been undertaken to provide new schemes of work for the current term, and skeleton plans for the following two terms. A fully comprehensive assessment policy has been produced. Appropriate departmental development plans and a financial plan have been carefully considered and submitted. Excellent support has been given in this process by the senior staff and this needs to continue. The timetable structure for teaching the curriculum reduces students' continuity of experience and the below average time allocation to music makes it difficult to teach the full National

Curriculum effectively. More detail of students' progress in terms of their acquisition of knowledge and skills is needed in reports to parents.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Students' standards of attainment are above average.
- All students have access to an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities.
- School teams and individual students gain a high level of success in competitive sport.
- The department has developed strong sporting links in the community to enhance further opportunities for students, particularly those who are gifted and talented.

Areas for Improvement

- Students have too few opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills within the subject.
- A wider range of teaching strategies is needed to give students broader learning experiences.
- Teachers need to emphasise more how students can evaluate and improve their own and others' performance.

147. Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 9. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were judged as average. Students' achievements in relation to their starting points on entry to the school are good, and all groups of students make good progress. The quality of teaching is good, and this promotes good learning. Students' positive attitudes to the subject contribute significantly to the high standards achieved in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.

148. Teacher assessments of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were above the national average, and the work seen in the inspection confirms this. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students, including those with special educational needs, achieve above average standards in team games. Girls and boys perform skilfully, and show a good understanding of the principles of play in netball and football. Most students use space well, can anticipate play and move to receive the ball successfully. Despite inclement weather conditions, the way in which Year 8 boys applied their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics to good effect in small sided games of football was impressive. Standards in hockey are average. Many students have yet to master the basic skills and tactics of the game sufficiently to be effective against competition. In basketball, Year 8 boys demonstrate very good ball control and a mature understanding of attacking and defensive play. High attaining students achieve very high standards in this game. This is illustrated well by last year's girls' Year 9 basketball team which reached the

semi-finals of the English Schools' Basketball Championships two years running, and the Years 7 and 9 boys' teams, which won the local and district championships.

149. Standards in swimming are good and students of all levels of attainment make good progress and achieve well. For example, a student with special needs ably demonstrated good technique in the front crawl stroke for his peers to observe. In gymnastics, Year 9 boys attain average standards of performance, while girls achieve to a high level, demonstrating good control, precision and quality of movement. In most classes, lower attainers make good progress because they are interested and concentrate well in lessons. Students' acquisition of skills, and their ability to select and apply what they have learned, is above average. However, their progress in learning how to evaluate and improve performance is limited. This is because there are few planned opportunities for them to evaluate their own and others' work, and they rarely observe, analyse and comment on performance against specific criteria. These skills are underdeveloped. The majority of students have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and they know how to warm up, effectively, before exercise.

150. High standards are achieved in extra-curricular sport and about three-quarters of the school population participates regularly in the extensive extra-curricular programme of clubs, inter-form, inter-house and inter-school fixtures. These are open to all students and provide excellent opportunities for high attainers and the gifted and talented to excel in their chosen sports. School teams in the major games, cross-country running, gymnastics and athletics have an impressive record of success in district competitions. Individual students gain representative honours at district, county and national level. The school is justifiably proud of the successes of its athletics team, and students from the school regularly compete at national level.

151. The quality of teaching is good, resulting in good learning throughout the school. Teachers know their students well and relationships are very good. The management of students and organisation of lessons is of a high order, which contributes significantly to students' good behaviour, standards of dress and positive attitudes. This sets the tone for good quality learning. Students respond well to the good-humoured encouragement of the teachers. Despite very poor weather for example, several football classes made good progress as a result of dynamic teaching, clear objectives and challenging activities. However, learning is often too closely directed by the teacher and this approach narrows students' learning experiences. Where teaching is most effective, students are challenged intellectually, as well as physically, and take an active part in their learning. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 gymnastics lesson, where students were given responsibility and took it well, leading to some good independent learning to produce a gymnastic routine. Teachers' expectations are high. Well-structured tasks build on students' previous knowledge and experience, and enable them to consolidate and improve newly learned skills through practice. However, when all students are given the same task, high attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. There are few opportunities for students to develop their numeracy and ICT skills within the teaching of the subject. There is some good practice in teaching literacy skills. For example, Year 9 girls were taught the

technical terminology to use when describing gymnastic performance. Overall, both boys and girls make good progress in their learning in Years 7 to 9.

152. Physical education plays an important part in the life of the school. All the teachers are highly committed and create an ethos that promotes an expectation of high standards. The new head of department has been in post for less than a month. In this transitional stage, leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The Gold Sportsmark has recently been awarded to the school for the second time. The curriculum now includes dance for boys, as well as girls. Schemes of work require review to include clear guidance on how tasks are planned to match students' abilities, how each strand of Curriculum 2000 will be developed and how students' literacy, numeracy and IT skills are to be extended through the curriculum. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place, but they have not yet been tried and tested. These will require careful monitoring to assess their effectiveness. Health and safety risk assessments in physical activities have not yet taken place. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. There is more good teaching, and standards of attainment have improved to become above average, overall.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is good.

Strengths

- Attainment is above the expectation of the Agreed Syllabus.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- More provision for ICT facilities within the teaching area to help students with research.

153. When students enter the school their standard in religious education is broadly average in relation to the standards expected in the Agreed Syllabus. Students respond very well to very good teaching and make good progress and achieve well. As a result, attainment levels in the subject are above average and students are keen and interested in the subject.

154. At the end of Year 9 teachers judge attainment to be above average. Work seen during the inspection confirms this judgement. Students demonstrate good achievement. They know some of the basic teachings of the major world religions, and pay particular attention to Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. Students respond well to the emphasis on what can be learned from religion. In Year 7, students understand the concept of justice in terms of the teaching of Jesus and can link this with the teaching on forgiveness. They can analyse the teachings of the major world religions with regard to their teaching on care for the environment. They can research information from religious writings, select what is relevant and evaluate these teachings. In Year 7, students writing for the "Jericho News" show a

good awareness of the magnitude of the change in Zacchaeus on meeting with Jesus. In Year 9, students understand the significance of buildings as in the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral after World War 2. They understand and can explain the symbolic meanings seen in sculpture, such as the triumph of good over evil. In Year 9, students research well for extended projects on topics such as human rights, Judaism and Buddhism. They gain Local Education Authority Units of Accreditation for this work. There is some good use of ICT in these projects.

155. All students make good progress in this subject. Students with special educational needs receive very good attention and support for English, particularly in writing. All students study the same topics. Work is presented at a level appropriate for each group and students gain an awareness of the skills of analysis. They are given opportunities to look at evidence and think for themselves. They are helped to investigate, discuss and report. They can analyse a story in terms of its meaning to see what messages can be learned. Work is structured in logical short steps so that students can build systematically on the knowledge gained at each stage. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys or girls or between high and low attaining students.

156. The quality of teaching is very good. All the religious education is taught by an experienced, specialist teacher who has very good class-management skills. Teaching demonstrates very good knowledge of the subject and religious education topics are taught with energy and sincerity. There is a very good climate for learning created in all lessons and students concentrate fully. There are detailed lesson plans that help students to build up their knowledge step by step. Work is presented in a lively and interesting way and relates to modern concepts such as justice, the environment and human rights. Students can see the subject as relevant to their lives and to the modern world. The teacher uses questions well to assess students' learning. There is a good pace in all lessons and an interesting range of activities is provided to inspire students to look at different aspects of the topic being studied. Very good use is made of illustrations and diagrams to convey information and meanings such as in symbols, ceremonies and cultural influences. Students' work is marked closely and they are given good guidance on how to improve. The subject is taught in the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

157. The teaching has developed in students very good attitudes to the subject. Students are keen and interested and are active learners. There is good scope for students to express their own opinions and they speak with confidence. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a clear focus on the spiritual and moral aspects of religious teachings. There is also consideration of the social and cultural aspects of major world religions with regard to communities, worship and ceremonies.

158. The subject is well managed. There are appropriate links to other subjects such as English and history. There is a good range of artefacts to promote interest and understanding. There is good use of video and a good range of high quality textbooks. There are no ICT facilities within the teaching area and this restricts research within lessons. Annual reports to parents do not give enough detail of students' progress. The high standards reported at the time of the last inspection

have been maintained and strengthened by the very good teaching, leading to good improvement overall in the subject's provision.