

INSPECTION REPORT

Calday Grange Grammar School

West Kirby

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105112

Headteacher: Nigel Briers

Reporting inspector: Richard Hancock
2715

Dates of inspection: 26 – 28 March 2001

Inspection number: 189102

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar [Selective]
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Boys [inc girls in the sixth form]
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Michael Ruddock
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Situated in a residential area in West Kirby on the Wirral peninsula, this long-established selective school for boys in the 11-18 age range has a current roll of 1390, including 435 students in the sixth form. The expanding sixth form admits girls. The social background of the pupils is mixed but overall is considerably advantaged. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is 4 per cent which is below the national average. For 1.5 per cent of the school's population, English is an additional language but the pupils are at an advanced stage in its use. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average at 0.1. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school is in the second phase of Technology College status and is also taking part in the Excellence in Cities initiative. The attainment of pupils on entry is well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Calday Grange Grammar School is in many respects a very successful school. Pupils' attainment is high in national tests at the end Year 9, and in GCSE and GCE A-level examinations. Pupils have very positive attitudes to work and behave very well. In the majority of lessons the quality of teaching is good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are well cared for. The school's relationship with parents is good. The school is well led and managed. Finance is very well handled and the school is giving good value for money. Despite high levels of attainment, the school could raise pupils' levels of achievement still further. Better use could be made of form time. The school is not yet fully implementing a systematic programme to monitor all teaching and learning. The curriculum offers a good degree of breadth and balance although the vocational, or work-related, aspects could be strengthened.

What the school does well

- Pupils reach very high levels of attainment in relation to pupils in all schools and in similar schools.
- The school helps pupils to develop very positive attitudes to learning and to behave very well.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- The school makes very good provision for the study of languages leading to pupils reaching high standards.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities broadens the experience of pupils.
- Because finances are very well managed they enable the school to give good value for money.

What could be improved

- Pupils' levels of achievement can be raised still further.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning through classroom observations is not fully developed.
- There is limited emphasis on the vocational, or work-related, aspects of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Form time is not well used.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Last inspected in September 1996, the school has maintained the pupils' high levels of success in examinations and has continued to help them develop into mature and responsible young people. Teaching has markedly improved. The school has addressed the allocation of time to different subjects. Information and communication technology [ICT] is now more widely used. Library provision has improved. More time is allocated to religious education [RE] in the main school. Accommodation has improved. Use is now made of data to track pupils' performance targets but teachers are not yet using target setting fully in the classroom as a means of helping all pupils make appropriate progress. The school has had success in ensuring that teachers exploit the pupils' creativity, imagination and reasoning ability but more still needs to be done in this area. The systematic and comprehensive observation of all teaching and learning to identify strengths and weaknesses and to promote professional development has still to be fully established.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE/GNVQ	A*	A*	A*	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A*	A	

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results at Key Stage 4 show that the school is in the top 5 per cent of all schools for attainment. Standards at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science are also very high in comparison with all schools. However, when the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels is compared with other grammar schools, results are well below average in English, and are average in mathematics, although above average in science. The average points score for each of these subjects shows that performance in English is below average in comparison with other grammar schools, whilst performance in mathematics is average and in science is above average. The overall trend of improvement for these three subjects is broadly in line with the national trend. Results in GCSE examinations are very high. When compared with similar schools they are either well above average or very high. Pupils achieve well in languages, geography and history. Relatively weaker subjects are art and design and drama. The average points score in the single sciences is also much nearer the national average than most other subjects. The trend in English, mathematics and science is above the national trend. The average points score for students' A and A/S level results over time has been either very high or well above average for all schools. In comparison with similar schools performance ranges from average to below average. Although standards are high in the school as a whole, pupils could achieve more yet, especially in English at Key Stage 3, in art in the main school and economics in the sixth form. There are disparities between subjects in terms of the percentage of pupils reaching grades A* and A, a situation which the school has identified in its school development plan. In some lessons in most subjects the achievement of pupils is not as high as it could be, especially where the quality of teaching is no more than satisfactory, just over a quarter of lessons overall. The school's targets in relation to pupils' average point score could be set higher because there is evidence that pupils are capable of achieving more.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The attitudes of pupils are very positive and help them to concentrate well, to work hard and to be motivated.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils listen well in class and focus on learning. Movement around the school is orderly.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils grow in confidence and learn to take responsibility. Relationships are informal and effective in developing an easy but productive working relationship between teachers and pupils.
Attendance	Very good. Levels of attendance are high, including those in the sixth form, and make an important contribution to standards.

Pupils work hard to succeed and reap the benefits. Very good standards of behaviour help teachers create a strong orderly climate for learning. Pupils are very mature and take on responsibility for their own conduct. Many show great independence although this aspect could be further enhanced. Pupils expect to attend school and make the best use of what the school has to offer. Because of the quality of relationships, they can be trusted to work well on their own or in groups and this adds variety to learning in some lessons and helps them to become more confident.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching in English varies from very good to satisfactory but is good overall. In science it varies from excellent to satisfactory but is good overall. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Mathematics teaching ranges from either good to very good. For subjects as a whole, the quality of teaching is best at Key Stage 4. Excellent teaching was observed in drama, science and music at Key Stage 4 and in one English lesson in the sixth form. An unsatisfactory lesson was observed in art at Key Stage 3. The strengths of teaching at Key Stage 3 are the teachers' subject knowledge and use of resources. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the main strengths lie in the knowledge that teachers have of their subject and the way they organise and plan. The major weakness is a tendency for teachers to talk for too long and to adopt a limited style of presentation which precludes pupils from discussing issues for themselves. A weakness at both key stages is the failure to provide appropriate learning tasks for pupils of differing abilities, a limitation identified in the last inspection report. It is quite common for teachers not to distinguish between learning objectives and learning strategies which prevents some lessons from being fully effective. The quality of teaching was excellent in 6 per cent of lessons, very good in 21 per cent, good in 44 per cent, satisfactory in 28 per cent and unsatisfactory in 1 per cent.

Pupils are able to acquire knowledge quickly and accurately. Their powers of understanding are considerable. They develop their skills well. In some subjects, such as history and geography, pupils investigate and research and present their findings with confidence. These qualities are still not being fully exploited by some teachers whose didactic style precludes pupils from having opportunities to demonstrate what they can achieve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and good in the sixth form. The major strength is the provision for modern languages. The vocational aspects could be strengthened.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils with learning needs are now being identified and some suitable provision is made for them.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The school does not make special provision for the 14 pupils currently on the roll for whom English is an additional language but they are at an advanced stage of language use.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils do have some opportunities to reflect on their experiences and there is scope in the curriculum for them to discuss ethical issues. They have very good scope for social development. The school's provision for music and drama is good and, in subjects such as music, there is a strong emphasis on studying diverse cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is a safe environment and pupils are well cared for.

The school's partnership with parents is good and the school has plans to strengthen it further. Some of the comments on pupils' progress in the annual reports are a little terse and lack helpful detail. The rich provision for studying modern languages is a strength of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and the effective application of ICT in a number of subjects is a strength at Key Stage 4. The very large number of A and A/S courses is a strength of the curriculum. Work experience and careers guidance enhance the curriculum. A major strength is the wealth of extra-curricular activities. Good links are made with primary schools. Good use has been made of visiting artists. A weaknesses lies in the lack of provision for religious education in Year 13 which the school plans to address. A daily act of collective worship does not always take place. Provision for personal, social and health education [PSHE] is still developing but is, nonetheless, effective. Form time is not always used effectively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership, working hard to promote the school's good name and ensuring that it is responsive to new needs and challenges. There is good support from colleagues in key positions. Management is satisfactory. The school needs a plan to ensure that teaching and learning are systematically monitored as a key part of its programme for self-improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body supports the school and takes an interest in its progress. At present its role in helping the school to evaluate its overall performance is under-developed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is now analysing key data and asking itself significant questions about aspects of its overall performance in national tests and public examinations but the process is not yet fully developed in the classroom.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school is well resourced.

Key staff work effectively together. The school has embraced major new initiatives, such as *Investors in People*, and *Excellence in Cities*. Most of the issues from the last inspection have been addressed. Management practices are sound. The school is now systematically analysing data on the performance of pupils and raising questions about strengths and weaknesses in practice. Not all departments are yet able to show how the use of this data in classrooms helps them improve the achievements of individual pupils. The annual departmental review for the headteacher is a useful forum for such matters to be discussed but there is no well established tradition of monitoring teaching through regular classroom observations. The quality of the teaching, whilst good overall, varies from excellent to satisfactory, with one unsatisfactory lesson seen. The school improvement plan is a sound document but its objectives are sometimes generalised or vague and lack precise targets. Systems for managing finance are very good and the school applies the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations of pupils • That pupils like school • That pupils make good progress • That pupils behave well • That teaching is good • That the school is well led and managed • The range of activities outside lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency and regularity of homework • Information about pupils' progress • Information about the school

The inspection team support what parents like most about the school. The inspection team found homework being handed in or being set and considered that its use was making a good contribution to standards. Inspectors also observed pupils undertaking homework in form time and in the library at lunchtime. It is not being systematically monitored and this could lead to the erratic provision which many parents described. The inspection team considered that the school provides sound information about pupils' progress, and that it is good in the sixth form, although comments in the annual reports do not always specify in what ways pupils could improve. The inspection team considered that the school publishes a great deal of material about its very active programme of events and believes that this, together with its web site, indicates that parents are able to receive good information about its work.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school helps pupils to reach very high levels of attainment in relation to pupils in all schools

1. By the time pupils reach the end of the period of statutory schooling, their results in GCSE examinations are very high when they are compared with those of pupils in all schools. The school's results are in the top five per cent of schools nationally. In the year 2000, 99.5 per cent of boys achieved five or more A* - C grades and 100 per cent achieved five or more grades A* - G. These results far exceed the performance of all schools against the national specified standard of 47.4 and 90.9 respectively.
2. The average point score of pupils was 66 against the national figure of 38.4. The figures for boys reaching five or more grades at A* - C were an improvement on those for 1999 and represent the best achievement by the school over the past five years. The gap between the school's results and those of other schools is the greatest that it has been over this period of time. The figures for boys reaching five or more grades at A* - G has always been 100 per cent or very close to it, exceeding the national figure by approximately 10 per cent each year. The pupils' average point score has also shown a slight improvement over time and in 2000 was the highest that it has been in a five-year period. All these results are very high when compared with the national average. The trend over time in pupils' attainment in the GCSE examinations has been above the national trend.
3. When the pupils' GCSE examination results are compared with those of other schools, where pupils achieved a similar points score in the Key Stage 3 tests in 1998, the school's performance is well above average for the percentage of pupils reaching five or more grades at A* - C and is very high for the percentage of pupils reaching five or more grades at A* - G. Pupils' progress at GCSE level based on the average point score is also well above average in relation to similar schools. In comparison with other grammar schools, the percentage of pupils reaching five or more grades A* - C is well above average and for pupils reaching five or more grades A*-G is high. Pupils' performance based on their average point score is also well above average. In 2000, the pupils' highest attainment in terms of A* and A grades was in Spanish, French, English literature, design and technology, geography and history.
4. Pupils' attainment at post -16 is also high. Over 200 students took two or more GCE A-Level or A/S equivalent examinations in 2000 and the average point score per candidate was 23.7 compared with the national average of 17.9. This average point score was well above average as it has been for the past three years. The progress made by these students since taking the GCSE examinations is much greater than the progress made by students nationally.
5. At Key Stage 3, the average point score for pupils in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 in English, mathematics and science, puts the school in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. It has occupied this position for the past five years. Pupils are attaining especially well in mathematics but for each of the core subjects the pupils' average point score for the last three years also exceeds the national average by a considerable margin. The trend in the school's average points score for all core subjects was broadly in line with the national trend. When these results are compared with those of pupils in other grammar schools, the science results stay above average but their performance in mathematics, and especially in English, is far less good.

6. A number of factors contribute to this high level of attainment. At Key Stage 4, the overall quality of teaching is good and in a significant number of lessons is very good or excellent. One of its major strengths is the knowledge that teachers have of their subject. This mastery is combined with an enthusiasm and love for the subject allied to a desire to share these attributes with pupils. The pupils directly benefit from these qualities. In turn, their very positive attitudes help them to learn effectively. High levels of literacy and numeracy enable them to work confidently across a wide range of subjects. Strongly motivated, they are often eager to learn, listen well, organise their learning effectively and set out to achieve. Teachers have a very good knowledge of both course and examination requirements.

The school succeeds in helping pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning and to behave well

7. In eight out of every ten lessons observed, the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were good or better. In a significant number they were outstanding, especially in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils are eager to learn. Their concentration is especially good and pupils listen intently when teachers are explaining theories or concepts and when they are giving instructions. Pupils work well, and respect the achievements of one another. In an English lesson, for example, pupils were not only keen to read out their own work, they wanted to share the work of one another, even breaking into applause when they heard something they particularly enjoyed. Although in some lessons, especially in science, pupils did not show enough attention, especially at the beginnings of lessons, for the most part it is very good. Pupils are keen to be involved and show advanced levels of independence when teachers create good learning opportunities for them. Especially good attitudes were shown by a small group of pupils in Year 8 who were studying the weather. Co-operating well, they were encouraged to infer from their learning what happens when a warm front meets a cold one. They then had their theories confirmed using a computer simulation of a weather satellite.
8. When they work on their own, pupils persevere with tasks. They take good care over the health and safety aspects of their work, as could be seen from the way they used machines and protective clothing in laboratories and workshops. They are especially mature in this regard. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 showed that they were able to cope with the demands of homework. They were especially appreciative of the support they received from their teachers. In the school as a whole, the pupils are confident and independent. In the sixth form pupils show that they have the capability to work without close supervision. They are able to undertake complex projects and to see them through from conception to completion. They have the capacity to be fascinated by what they find out, as could be seen from their work in law.
9. Strongly motivated to succeed, students prepare well for national tests and for public examinations. They pay good attention to detail and, despite some untidy handwriting, usually present their work with care and sometimes with pride. Their attitudes to information and communication technology are very positive and they are able to see its value to them as a powerful tool for taking their learning further. Many enjoy sport and relish being competitive without being aggressive. They respect property, and take care of books and equipment. In discussion, they show that they can express opinions but also listen and consider the opinions of others.
10. These attitudes are encouraged by teachers who make it clear to pupils that they expect high standards of work and behaviour. In most cases, teachers take appropriate action when pupils occasionally misbehave. The school sets a strong but not repressive code for behaviour which it expects pupils to observe. Teachers praise pupils when they do

well but more use could be made of this to raise the self-esteem of pupils further. Teachers set homework and expect it to be completed. They mostly provide good feedback to pupils on what they do well and give good guidance as to how the work can be improved further but sometimes marking is much more superficial and even infrequent. The positive attitudes of the pupils and good standards of behaviour are major factors in contributing to a climate for learning in which pupils can succeed. The school promotes high levels of attendance and the pupils are expected to be punctual for lessons. In this way the school makes the very best use of the time allotted to learning.

The school provides good quality teaching

11. Although teaching is of good quality throughout the school, it is best at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is far more very good teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than there is at Key Stage 3. The single most obvious strength of the teaching at Key Stage 4 lies in the mastery that teachers show of their subject. This allows them to occupy a commanding and confident presence in the classroom. They are able to translate this into effective learning activities for pupils. They set out the learning objective clearly. They accurately explain processes and concepts. They sum up well what has been learned at the end of lessons and frequently set homework to reinforce or to extend learning. Pupils' work is carefully and regularly marked and pupils are given good feedback so that they know what they have achieved and what they have to do to improve further. Lessons move at a fast pace and good use is made of time. Teachers have a very good working knowledge of examination requirements and this helps them to prepare their pupils well.
12. Many of the qualities that characterise the teaching at Key Stage 4 are also true of the teaching in the sixth form. Again, it is the mastery of the subject which is the most single striking factor. This enables the teachers to provide very good levels of challenge for pupils which takes the study of a subject to new heights. Good examples of this were seen in the very advanced work being done in mathematics. Fluent exposition was reinforced by effective exemplification. In subjects as various as geography and music, teachers make use of terminology specific to the subject which helps the students to develop a technical vocabulary so that they can confidently pursue the study of a subject.
13. Teachers do well to involve most pupils in the learning, building on their existing knowledge and using targeted questions. Other strengths include the ability to help pupils to find out things for themselves so that effective independent learning is encouraged, especially effective in French lessons, particularly through the use made of ICT. A further good example was seen in a law lesson when the pupils were required to make individual presentations about statute relating to case studies. In economics, students were learning very well about inflation measures in the UK economy and were then using their knowledge to analyse current events, helped by the teacher's very good background knowledge and skilled presentation. As at Key Stage 4, teachers have an expert knowledge of examination and course requirements which enables them to help the pupils prepare well.
14. At both key stages excellent relationships underpin the teaching and learning. The weaker features of the teaching are to be found in the tendency for some teachers to believe that pupils have grasped a concept without ascertaining that they definitely have, and sometimes to dominate the learning. These features cause pupils not to have the scope to find things out for themselves, a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection and especially noticeable in lessons in business education and general studies.

The school establishes very good provision for languages leading to pupils reaching high standards

15. The curriculum provides extensive scope for pupils to study a wide range of languages. The main languages studied are French and German but there are also opportunities for pupils to study Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Latin. Because of the construction of a new teaching block, facilities for the teaching of languages have recently been much improved. One result of this is that the scope for pupils to use information and communication technology to study languages is now especially good; the multi-media resource is being especially used well to help pupils reach the very highest levels of attainment at A and A/S levels. One of the features of the school that impressed some parents at the meeting with the registered inspector was the opportunity that the pupils had to study a wide range of languages.
16. Pupils' results in Spanish in the GCSE examination in 2000 were the best in the school for pupils reaching grades A* - A, although the entry was small. Results were almost as good in French from a much larger entry although not all pupils who study the subject are entered for the GCSE examination. Although not so many pupils reached the highest grades in German, the overall results were also good, especially in the A* - C grade range. The small number of pupils studying Latin who took the examination in classical studies did less well but the majority achieved a grade at A* - C.
17. The French teaching observed was very challenging. Good subject knowledge enabled the teacher to conduct the lesson almost entirely in the target language with the pupils constantly engaged. The lesson was well planned and activities were varied and interesting. The response of the Year 7 pupils was positive. All these factors were contributing to the high standards reached by the pupils who were growing in confidence in the use of tenses when speaking French. In the same year group, the Latin teaching observed was also distinguished by good subject knowledge and effective planning. Effective use of question and answer techniques was made to draw pupils into the learning which was greatly enjoyed by the attentive pupils because of the teacher's ability to make it so enjoyable. Above average levels of attainment were also observed in lessons in Spanish and German and standards were well above average in Russian in a Year 11 lesson. The higher attaining pupils studying Chinese in a Year 9 lesson showed an ability to answer simple questions with a good range of vocabulary and a variety of phrases. Very good levels of subject mastery by students were observed in French lessons in the sixth form and much competence in the Spanish lessons.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities

18. Parents strongly endorsed the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. Many of these are of a sporting nature. The activities were described as rich and varied at the time of the last inspection and the school has sustained this provision, despite the staggered lunch hour which makes it difficult to get teams and musical groups together for practice. Nonetheless, talented pupils have good opportunities to play sport and to excel in competition with other schools. They have the chance to succeed at the very highest levels and frequently do so in a wide range of sports.
19. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in drama productions of a very varied nature. Some students were about to take a play on an Italian tour. They also have opportunities to visit theatres, and writers, musicians and artists visit the school. Pupils are able to take part in musical concerts of many kinds. They visit galleries and museums, especially in the school's scheduled week of cultural pursuits. Other

activities include fashion shows and a public speaking competition, as well as events such as debates and mock trials.

20. All the pupils in Year 7 have the opportunity to share in a week's residential course in Snowdonia. Community activities include sixth form students making good use of the school's ICT facilities to teach IT to a group of primary school pupils through simple spreadsheet activities and some are involved with the production of the school's newsletter. The languages department organises a range of exchanges and there are further links with other countries, for instance, the combined cadet force visits Nepal and students in Year 12 enjoy three weeks of work experience in France.

The school ensures that finances are very well managed

21. At the time of the last inspection, financial control was rigorous and the school was giving good value for money. These qualities have been maintained. The sixth form is cost effective. The most recent auditor's report found no significant weaknesses in the way that the school handles its financial arrangements and there is no incidence or history of any irregularities. The school immediately acts to correct any concerns such as the minor ones found by the LEA audit carried out in early 2000. At this time, the school was also complimented on its rigorous financial controls.
22. The governing body plays a significant role in ensuring that its finance committee meets five times each year and always receives reports on the progress of the budget. There is a good degree of flexibility in the way in which the school balances its formula funding to provide a base budget for departments whilst retaining funds for special circumstances. Special funds are used well. Reports relating to the main Technology College grant are carefully prepared and it can be clearly seen how the money is used to provide direct educational benefit to local primary schools through the use of the college's ICT equipment and expertise. The Able Children Centre can account for its expenditure and show how it directly promotes valuable activities which are in the process of being carefully monitored. The Standards Fund grant for teachers' in-service training is being well used and teachers are required to evaluate the courses they attend.
23. Best value procedures and practices are carefully adhered to. For instance, expenditure on services such as cleaning is carefully monitored and catering services are put out to tender. The school has carried out an evaluation of its expenditure in order to strive for an appropriate degree of balance. It makes use of consultation and compares its performance with that of other schools. High standards are set for its overall performance. By selling unwanted land, the school has been able to invest money in vastly extending and improving accommodation. Its recent ambitious and forward-looking building programme has fed directly through to clear educational achievements, particularly in the areas of languages, design and technology and the humanities.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils' levels of achievement can be raised still further so that all pupils reach their full potential

24. Whilst the overall attainment of the pupils in the school is high, there is evidence that the achievements of pupils could be higher still. At Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress in English but it could be greater if teaching made more use of individual targets and focused on addressing the individual learning needs of pupils. In some lessons pupils were not giving of their best in a number of subjects, especially at Key Stage 3 where the quality of teaching, although good overall, nonetheless ranged from

excellent to satisfactory, with one lesson being unsatisfactory. Instances can be found in some lessons, particularly in art and science at Key Stage 3, where pupils are not always fully involved in the learning. The performance of pupils in art in the GCSE examinations is considerably lower than their performance in most other subjects. Results in drama have also been below those of most other subjects. Results in A and A/S level economics have lagged well behind those of other subjects. Performance on A and A/S courses varies from subject to subject and there is scope for an even higher and more consistent performance at this level. There is considerable variation in the proportion of pupils reaching grades A* - A in different subjects each year in the GCSE examination and there is scope here for the school to ensure that students' achievements at the highest levels are more evenly spread across the full range of subjects.

25. A key factor in helping to ensure that all pupils reach yet higher levels of achievement in all subjects would be the use of target setting based on the teachers' close knowledge of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

The monitoring of teaching and learning

- 26 This was a key issue for the school at the time of the last inspection five years ago but it has only started to be addressed by the school in the past year. Consequently, there is no established systematic monitoring of teachers at work in the classroom. Because of this, the school has been missing important opportunities to disseminate best practice and to ensure that it has the most accurate information to guide the professional development of staff. Over time, it cannot be confident that its wish to get all pupils to achieve their potential has been reinforced by high quality teaching and learning at all points in the school. Observations undertaken during the inspection indicate that there is unevenness of practice. Furthermore, it means that key information which would be helpful to the governing body to assist its task of helping the school to evaluate its overall performance has been lacking.
- 27 Very good arrangements are in place for monitoring the work of newly qualified teachers, teachers who are new to the school and teachers who feel in need of support. The introduction of the scheme for performance management since last September has also resulted in more classroom observations being made. The school is now in a good position to ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning embraces all teachers as part of its systematic approach to whole school improvement.

There is limited emphasis on the vocational, or work-related, aspects of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form

- 28 The vocational, or work-related element of the curriculum is largely to be found in the week of work experience for pupils in Year 10, in careers education in PSHE lessons and in the business education course which can be studied in the sixth form. There are no vocational courses at Key Stage 4. Consequently, there is no progression leading into the business education course in the sixth form. Although the school has undertaken planning work in this area, the key skills of communication, ICT and numeracy are not yet being systematically delivered in the curriculum as a whole. The school could strengthen the vocational aspect of the curriculum so that pupils develop a greater understanding of the world of work and its demands and of the qualifications, skills and attitudes needed to enhance their employability. Schemes of work could helpfully stress the work-related aspects of their subjects.

The use of form time

- 29 Each school day begins with a period of form time when attendance registers are marked and pupils are given any necessary information on a wide range of school matters. Form time is sometimes followed by an assembly. Form time lasts for thirty minutes but on the whole it is time which is not well used. In one Year 7 class, for instance, after marking the register, collecting absence notes and giving out notices concerning arrangements for the forthcoming sports day, the tutor asked the class to get on with work. Some pupils started their homework, others read and some made use of the computer. Several did nothing. There was a low level of chatter which rose over time and for the next twenty minutes little was achieved by the pupils. The tutor left the class without any further comment. This occurred on a day when no assembly followed, yet there was no 'thought for the day' or act of worship in the session.
- 30 In a Year 9 registration class, the tutor used registration time to organise work for an absent pupil and spent time with pupils who were 'on report'. In this session, homework diaries were briefly checked but there was no planned activity for the pupils who sat chatting or reading football magazines and quiz books. There was no 'thought for the day' and little good use of time. Time was better used in a Year 10 session when the tutor gave advice on how best to revise, the 'top ten tips' being well received by very attentive pupils. But there was no act of worship in the session. In a Year 12 registration, the students assembled promptly and after being marked present moved on to an assembly where they heard a scripture reading given with spirit and then listened to a long list of notices which would have been better given in form time as they were difficult to hear. A written list was later distributed which made the assembly notices redundant. Time could have been better used. The school has still to think through the use of form time and in particular its relationship with the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 31 In order to improve the overall quality of education offered by the school and to raise standards still further, the headteacher, staff and governing body now need to:
- 1) Raise overall levels of achievement still higher through the use of challenging targets in the classroom based on a careful analysis of data. [paragraphs 5 and 24]
 - 2) Systematically monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom so that best practice can be shared and professional development needs identified. [paragraphs 26 and 27]
 - 3) Improve the use of form time so that it makes an effective contribution to the personal development of the pupils and helps the school to meet the statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. [paragraphs 29 and 30]
 - 4) Consider strengthening the vocational, or work-related, aspects of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form so that pupils develop greater understanding of the world of work. [paragraph 28]

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The Sixth Form

- 32 The sixth form is large and flourishing and overall provision is good. Academic standards are high and good scope is provided for the all-round development of students. For the past five years the average points score for students studying two or more A-level subjects has been well above the national average. The rate of improvement over that time has also been well above the national figure. The work seen in lessons and the target grades set for students indicates that current standards are above the national average. Whilst results are higher than average, to a degree, performance does vary from subject to subject and recent results in economics have been disappointing. In 2000, results in geography were markedly less good than those in history. The average points score is in line with that for similar schools. There is no overall target setting for students' A and A/S level attainment.
- 33 The quality of teaching is good. Its main strengths are to be found in the teachers' knowledge of their subject, the effectiveness of planning and the thoroughness of preparation. Good use is made of resources and teachers ensure that homework makes an important contribution to students' learning. They establish good relationships with students. In the weaker teaching, lessons do not have clear objectives and the over-use of a didactic style of presentation precludes teachers from finding out if students have fully understood what a lesson is driving at. For the most part, students learn well and directly benefit from the teachers' knowledge, the way that local examples are used to help fix points in students' minds, the good use of video to illustrate key points, and, in law, the individual presentation of legal cases which enabled students to grow in independence as they took control of their own learning.
- 34 A strength of the curriculum is the very large number of subjects on offer at A and A/S level. There is also a wealth of extra-curricular activities and a very varied programme of activities on Wednesday afternoons when students can choose to take part in a wide range of sports or fitness activities or undertake community service of different kinds. Students enjoy the scope offered by this programme. The strong positive attitudes they show are characteristic of how they view their experience of being in the sixth form generally. Few students 'drop out' during each academic year. The weaker features of the curriculum include the limited emphasis on vocational courses and the lack of provision for teaching RE in Year 13. There is no formal plan for developing the delivery of key skills to all students.
- 35 Although the management of the sixth form is not the province of one person, the different elements are well taken care of. A particular strength is the way in which the performance of each individual student is monitored. Transfer and induction arrangements are good. The sixth form is also cost effective. Students feel very well supported. Reports on students' progress are comprehensive with detailed analysis of weaknesses in most subjects and scope for students to assess their own performance. The decision to admit girls is resulting in a balanced and mature sixth form community.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	21	44	28	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	955	435
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	54	

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	54	0

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.36
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.47
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	192	0	192

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	189	189	190
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	189	189	189
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	98 [98]	98 [99]	99 [99]
	National	63 [63]	65 [62]	59 [55]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	78 [68]	98 [94]	93 [76]
	National	28 [28]	42 [38]	30 [23]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	192	192	192
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	192	192	192
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 [100]	100 [100]	100 [100]
	National	64 [64]	66 [64]	62 [60]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	89 [81]	99 [96]	90 [95]
	National	31 [31]	39 [37]	29 [28]

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	185	0	185

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	184	185	185
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	184	185	185
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	99 [96]	100 [99]	100 [99]
	National	47.4 [46.6]	90.6 [90.9]	95.6 [95.8]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	66 [64]
	National	38.4 [38.2]

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

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	172	46	218

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	24.0	23.7	23.9	3.5	N/a	3.5
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

International Baccalaureate	Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	14
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	1372
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	14	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	85
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.4:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	29.1
Key Stage 4	23.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3640157
Total expenditure	4857638
Expenditure per pupil	3528
Balance brought forward from previous year	1784237
Balance carried forward to next year	566756

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1390
Number of questionnaires returned	256

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	41	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	41	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	56	4	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	48	15	6	2
The teaching is good.	42	52	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	38	14	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	35	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	24	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	33	38	21	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	62	32	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	38	5	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	36	4	2	1

Other issues raised by parents

The registered inspector received fifty four written comments from parents. About one third of the comments were written in appreciation of the headteacher and staff and applauded their dedication and commitment, not only in helping pupils to achieve well academically but also through sporting achievements and for fostering their all round development. The most common subject was that of homework and comments covered similar ground to that referred to in the main report. Other concerns included the school's lack of support for slower learners, inconsistency in the quality of teaching, lack of early consultation on pupils' progress in Year 7, the unapproachable nature of the school, and the lack of encouragement of boys to take part in sporting activities unless they had particular prowess.