

INSPECTION REPORT

WADE DEACON HIGH SCHOOL

Widnes

LEA area: Halton

Unique reference number: 111435

Headteacher: Mr Peter Barry

Reporting inspector: Sue Kearney
18006

Dates of inspection: 8 - 11 May 2001

Inspection number: 189183

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Birchfield Road
Widnes
Cheshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Woodroffe

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wade Deacon High School is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-16. It is located in Widnes in the borough of Halton. It is a bigger than average school with 1103 pupils on roll and includes a specialist unit for hearing impaired pupils. The majority of pupils come to the school from the immediate locality and the school is oversubscribed. Overall, the pupils come from average social backgrounds. In the last two years the standards of attainment when pupils enter the school are above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average and the percentage speaking English as a second language is low. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational needs is average. Attendance is above the national average. There has been no significant change in the characteristics of the school since the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Wade Deacon High School is a good and effective school. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2000 are above average. Pupils achieved standards at the end of Key Stage 3 that are well above national averages. The headteacher and key staff provide the school with very good leadership and management. There is good teaching across the school, and in many lessons it is even better, although a very small number of lessons seen were unsatisfactory. Financial control is very good and very good use is made of grants and funding from external sources such as the Technology College programme and Excellence in Cities. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money when the above average expenditure is balanced against the standards attained by pupils.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Standards across the school have improved in GCSE examination results since the last inspection. In 2000 examination results in GCSE were above the national average. This represents good achievement when the prior attainment of pupils is considered.
- The standards and achievement of pupils in English are particularly high.
- Teaching is good across the school and the proportion of very good and excellent lessons has increased since the last inspection. Teaching contributes to good learning.
- The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are very good and are reflected in the high standards achieved by the pupils.
- Relationships across the school are very good and pupils have very good attitudes to their learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Some aspects of school performance require more structured monitoring and evaluation. These include teaching and learning, the provision for pupils' spiritual development, the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- The school needs to further develop the use of assessment data and national benchmarks to assist in the review of subject performance, the overall progress of pupils and to raise standards even further.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Wade Deacon High School has made good improvement overall since the inspection in September 1996. Standards in GCSE examinations have risen faster than is the case nationally. The quality of teaching is higher with a greater proportion of very good lessons. There has been an improvement in the culture of the school and pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to school and relationships within the school are now very good. Teachers are more experienced in the use of target setting to improve standards and subject leaders are now accountable for performance in their subject areas.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is significantly improved and the library has been extended and refurbished. Pupils are now more regularly involved in activities which encourage independent learning. A curriculum review has improved the balance of time available to subjects and led to improved standards.

Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced. However, these are not yet applied with sufficient rigour and there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Although the proportion of lessons seen to be very good has increased, there are still significant weaknesses in some areas.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	B	B	A

<i>Key</i>	
<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

Standards of attainment in Key Stage 4 have improved since the last inspection. The improvement

is faster than the national trend although it has slowed down considerably since 1998. In previous years pupils entered the school with standards that were in line with those expected for their ages, and examination results for 16 year olds are now above the national average when compared to all schools. They are well above average when compared to similar schools. This indicates that the pupils achieve well while at the school.

In the 2000 GCSE examinations, the highest standards were in English which shows a consistent improvement in results over the last three years. Examination results in physical education also show improvement over the last three years. Standards in all science subjects, history and technology have fallen over the last three years. All other subjects show variation in results over this time. In 2000, results in art, design and technology, drama and modern languages were particularly strong. Performance by pupils was not as good in science, mathematics, religious education, history and geography, although examination results in 2000 were in line with the national average in mathematics, history and geography in respect of the average points score. In these subjects pupils entered the school with standards that were in line with expectations; these standards have been maintained but not increased. Results in science are below the national average for average points score and well below average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C. This represents unsatisfactory achievement across Key Stage 4 in science.

In 2000 results in the three core subjects in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above the national average. The trend over the last four years is below the national trend for improvement but rose above the national trend in 2000. In recent years pupils entered the school with standards above average in English, mathematics and science. Examination results at the end of Key Stage 3 represent good achievement across the key stage.

In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 11 reflect the examination results in the previous two years and are above expectations when compared to all schools. Pupils' achievement in some subjects is above expectations and in English is often well above. Pupils' achievement in science is less than expected when their attainment on entry into the school is taken into account. Literacy skills are very well developed in English, but less consistently so in other subjects. Numerical skills are well developed in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in response to good teaching. The majority of pupils are competent in the use of ICT although the use of ICT is not yet sufficiently integrated into subjects across the curriculum.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school.	Pupils show very good attitudes to school and to each other.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms.	Very good overall and in nearly all lessons.
Personal development and relationships.	Pupils develop very good relationships with each other and with adults. Relationships between pupils in lessons are often very good.
Attendance.	Attendance is above the national average.

The school has a strong focus on attendance and behaviour and this is reinforced at every opportunity. As a result pupils understand what is expected of them and behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. Support for pupils' personal development is good and the headteacher and senior staff rigorously enforce the moral and social code of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of which 38 per cent were good and 21 per cent were very good or excellent. Four of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory. These were in science and design and technology. The best teaching overall was seen in English and art, although excellent teaching was also seen in science and design and technology.

Pupils leave the school with standards in English that are well above average. Good achievement results from consistently good teaching and a rigorously planned, challenging curriculum. Teaching in mathematics is mostly good although there was no very good or excellent teaching seen and some lessons have a narrow range of teaching styles. In science the quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory although it varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. This inconsistency results from a lack of rigour in the monitoring of classroom activities. Teaching in art is consistently good or better while in technology it ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in humanities is satisfactory with some good and very good lessons.

Pupils' skills in literacy are well developed in English although the policy for development across the school is not yet embedded in all subjects. Numerical skills are supported in mathematics but less so across the curriculum. Pupils' competence in ICT is in line with expectations but ICT is not used effectively across all subjects. This is a priority within the current school development plan. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the hearing impaired pupils, is very good.

Pupils are very attentive in lessons, keen and willing to persevere. In the majority of lessons teaching is good and behaviour is very good. Teachers ensure that lessons are well planned, including the effective use of homework. In nearly all subjects, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the topics. This enables them to challenge pupils by effective questioning and prompts greater understanding in pupils. In the few lessons where teaching is less than good, there are low expectations, a slow pace and over-reliance on experience rather than clear planning. The pupils are not challenged and narrow teaching methods fail to engage pupils in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum.	The curriculum is good although statutory requirements are not met for collective worship.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	Pupils have very good provision and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Moral and social development is very good. Cultural development is good. There are weaknesses in the planning and monitoring of spiritual development, which is satisfactory. The overall provision is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils.	Procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff.	Very good overall. Most pastoral managers and curriculum managers are effective. The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities.	Governors are supportive of the school. They have clear views about the ethos of the school. They are not fully effective in reviewing performance across the school and do not fulfil their statutory responsibility for collective worship. Overall satisfactory.
The school's evaluation of its performance.	The procedures for effectively evaluating the work of the school are good but not yet sufficiently rigorous. Actions taken have not yet brought about consistent improvements across some key areas.
The strategic use of resources.	Very good financial control ensures the best use of resources.

The governors, headteacher and senior staff have created an ethos where young people feel secure, enjoy a variety of challenges in school, develop confidence and form very good relationships.

There are, however some weaknesses that are having an effect on the overall performance of the school. Assessment data and national benchmarks are not yet used effectively, particularly in monitoring the progress of high-attaining pupils and pupils in science. There is a lack of rigour in the monitoring of some areas of school performance. These include some aspects of teaching and learning; the provision for pupils' spiritual development; the opportunities to develop skills in ICT across the curriculum; and the development of literacy and numeracy.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
Children make good progress.	Information to parents about children's progress

Behaviour is good.	Arrangements for homework.
Children are expected to work hard.	Liaison with parents.
Teaching is good.	

The inspection team agrees with all the positive views expressed. Homework was seen to support learning in several subjects. The inspection team shares some of the concerns of parents about the quality of information on pupils' progress and the liaison with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards across the school have improved in GCSE examination results since the last inspection. In 2000 examination results in GCSE were above the national average. This represents good achievement when the prior attainment of pupils is considered.

1. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 4 across the school have improved since the last inspection. The improvement is faster than the national trend although it has slowed down considerably since 1998. In previous years pupils entered the school with standards that were in line with those expected for their ages, and examination results for 16 year olds are now above the national average when compared to all schools. They are well above average when compared to those of similar schools. This indicates that the pupils achieve well while at the school. However the validity of the data when pupils first entered the school can not be assured because the school does not have the information from the national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2. Since the previous inspection in 1996 the average points score per pupil in the GCSE examinations has increased from 36.6 to 43.5 in 2000. However, there has been minimal increase since 1998 when the average points score across the school was 34.4. The proportion of pupils awarded higher grades A*-C has risen from 44 per cent in 1996 to 60.4 per cent in 2000 although there has been a slight drop in the last three years. When the GCSE results in 2000 are compared with the standards the same pupils gained in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the pupils are seen to achieve well. Pupils' progress across Years 10 and 11, based on average points score per pupil, was close to the average in comparison with similar schools, when the prior attainment of pupils is considered. The pupils' performance at GCSE based on average points score was well above average when compared to similar schools when the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is considered. There has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls over the last three years.

2. When the proportions of pupils awarded A*-C grades in 2000 GCSE examinations are compared, the highest standards are in English, which shows a consistent improvement in results over the last three years. Examination results in physical education also show improvement over the last three years. Standards in all science subjects, history and technology have fallen over the last three years. All other subjects show variation in results over this time. In 2000, results in art, design and technology, drama and German are particularly strong although standards in technology and drama have declined since the previous year. Performance by pupils is not as good in science, mathematics, history and geography although examination results in 2000 are in line with the national average in mathematics, history and geography for the average points score. These pupils entered the school with standards that are in line with expectations and in these subjects the school has maintained standards but not increased them. Results in science are below the national average for average points score and well below average for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C. This represents unsatisfactory achievement across Key Stage 4 in science.

3. Pupils' attainment in national tests in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above average across the three core subjects. Pupils do better in English and science than in mathematics. In recent years pupils entered the school with standards that are above average in mathematics, English

and science. The 2000 results indicate that pupils make good progress across Key Stage 3. When the results are compared with those of pupils in similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, attainment is well above average in English and mathematics and very high in science. However these comparisons do not take account of the standards pupils achieve when they enter the school and the school did not collect the data from the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 for these particular pupils. Since the last inspection the average points score has increased from 33.7 to 34.9, which is not as fast as the national trend although there was a significant improvement in 2000. Over the last three years the performance of boys and girls has been similar across the three core subjects. Pupils have consistently performed better in English than they have in mathematics and science.

The standards and achievement of pupils in English are particularly high.

4. In Year 9 the current standards match the well-above average standards achieved in national tests for 2000. Pupils write with high levels of accuracy. Only a few fail to meet the expected standards. The best engage the reader's interest through a wide range of vocabulary. They have a perceptive appreciation of literature. When writing about Seamus Heaney's poetry, they comment lucidly on rhyme schemes and on the impact of the poet's choice of language. They also comment with maturity on what the poems mean to them personally. Standards are high because the teachers have high expectations. Year 9 pupils study texts usually associated with the higher levels at GCSE such as 'Lord of the Flies' and 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. The policy of teaching in single sex groups is paying dividends. For example, it gives more pupils the opportunity to be taught in the highest set. Teachers have developed a range of strategies that suit the single sex groups. For example, the questioning in a boys' Year 9 group challenged their speculative thinking, invited them to read beyond the lines and helped them think more critically as they started their study of 'Animal Farm'. Good provision is made for the lower-attaining pupils. Again challenge is a feature of the work. A mixed gender group, specifically identified for extra support in Year 7, read and discussed Wilde's 'The Selfish Giant'. Careful questioning helped them to understand some of the story's symbolism and the way the narrative changes our feelings about the characters.

5. In Years 10 and 11 good progress is maintained. In 2000, 75 per cent of the pupils gained Grade C or higher in their GCSE English examination. Standards in English literature were also well above average. This was a significant achievement since the school enters far more candidates for this examination than most schools. The very low numbers at the lowest grades confirm the good progress made in English by pupils with special educational needs, because of well-targeted teaching and good support throughout the school. In the current Year 11, high standards are being maintained. Teachers are skilled in ensuring that the pupils organise their work with clarity. This is reflected in good paragraphing and clear, logical expression. The highest-attaining pupils analyse literature effectively, and comment with insight on an author's implied meanings. One girl, for example, demonstrated succinctly the angelic nature of a Hardy heroine through her detailed references to the symbolic nature of Hardy's choice of words.

6. As in Years 7-9 good teaching is not confined to higher-attaining pupils. A teacher of a group of middle and lower-attaining pupils enthused them through his enjoyment of Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress'. As a result, they became involved in the lesson and made perceptive observations in their writing. Teaching standards are strong throughout the department. The well-planned range of

activities in a Year 7 boys' group continually stimulated and sustained their interest. During the lesson they completed a spelling test, discussed features of formal language as a whole class and read in groups a play containing examples of formal language. The lesson finished in a concentrated silence with the boys writing their own reports on events in the play using a formal style. Their writing revealed genuine gains in learning.

7. The department benefits from the very good leadership of the head of department, ably supported by the co-ordinator for Key Stage 3. The head of department has led the revision of schemes of work and encouraged far higher expectations. She analyses pupils' previous results to help her set demanding targets. Teachers show a high degree of professional commitment. During the inspection they talked enthusiastically about their work and their pupils. They are open to suggestion and clearly look for new ways to improve.

Teaching is good across the school and the proportion of very good and excellent lessons has increased since the last inspection. Teaching provides opportunities for good learning.

8. In just over half of the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good or better. The overall quality of the teaching is broadly similar to the last inspection where 95 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better compared to 92 per cent during this inspection. There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of very good and excellent teaching, from 12 per cent to 21 per cent. Excellent teaching was seen in English, science, design and technology, and art. Four lessons were seen where the quality of the teaching and learning was unsatisfactory. These were in design and technology and science.

9. For the most part, teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects and this enables them to question pupils effectively to ensure good knowledge recall and understanding by pupils. The management of pupils is nearly always good with very few lessons seen where pupils were disruptive or restless. Relationships with pupils are constructive and supportive and in the very best lessons, humour played an important part in supporting very good relationships. These factors all contribute to successful learning, as was seen in a Year 11 design and technology lesson. The teacher indicated to pupils his high expectation of them by creating an energetic and brisk pace, sharing the objectives for the lesson and his disappointment in those who had not fully completed the homework. He demonstrated very good knowledge of the examination requirements through an excellent description of how to gain higher marks on specific questions. The teacher had planned the lesson thoroughly, making effective use of a variety of techniques to engage the pupils in their learning and using a teaching style that encouraged, cajoled and challenged pupils throughout the lesson.

10. In English teaching is good and often better. Pupils' literacy skills are well developed in English lessons but the school policy is not yet well integrated into other subjects. Teaching in mathematics is good and numerical skills are well taught in mathematics. Pupils have sufficient skills to enable them to apply numerical knowledge in other subjects. For example, in some of the better lessons, teachers demonstrate good skills and knowledge of topics and are very aware of examination requirements. Basic number work, including mental skills, is well rehearsed and pupils are well supported to achieve good standards in the course work. Overall in mathematics lessons, course work is marked accurately by teachers and useful comments for improvement are provided.

However, few lessons in mathematics exhibit the higher levels of teaching and the range of strategies used to motivate and stimulate pupils is very narrow. Some of the areas for development in mathematics teaching are in the planning to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, in particular, providing more challenge for higher-attaining pupils. Teachers need to take more account of prior learning and target their teaching to specific learning objectives in order to ensure continual challenge and improvement.

11. Although there is good and sometimes excellent teaching in science, teaching was unsatisfactory in too many lessons. The monitoring of classroom activity and pupils' work is not sufficiently rigorous. In the best lesson, Year 8 pupils studied rocks, elements and compounds and reactivity. The lesson was very well planned with a good range of activities to reinforce and consolidate previous knowledge. Modern technology, in the form of computer, video and Power Point presentations, was used very effectively to maintain pupils' interest. The pace of the lesson was fast but the question and answer techniques used were able to elicit extended responses from pupils, developing their oral skills and encouraging them to use technical terms. In some of the weaker lessons, teachers relied too much on testing simple recall of knowledge, and opportunities for pupils to engage in their learning were minimal. The planning did not include clear learning objectives but focused on activities to be completed. The pace of lessons was slowed down by over-long exposition by the teacher and the failure to set tight time-limits for the completion of activities.

The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are very good and are reflected in the high standards achieved by the pupils.

12. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school. Since his appointment six years ago he has created a culture in the school that is recognised by staff as being more consultative. He places great emphasis on improving standards and has made staff accountable for performance in their areas of responsibility. For example, all subjects are reviewed in the Autumn term against targets which are negotiated but which are acknowledged by staff to be very challenging. Staff, including less experienced colleagues, appreciate this management style and the opportunities it offers for their professional development. For example, the co-ordination of literacy in Year 9 and the pilot GNVQ programme in Year 11 in ICT both involve younger members of staff.

13. The headteacher is very well supported by two deputies. All three are aware of the need for rigorous systems for monitoring teaching and learning. The senior team communicates effectively a positive ethos throughout the school that results in high expectations among many of the middle managers. Major curriculum initiatives such as the Technology College application have been steered into the school with sensitivity and have resulted in a significant expansion of new technology into areas such as modern languages, English, music and art. All staff are encouraged to put forward ideas for improvement. The senior team is cautiously responsive and supports initiatives on a calculated and piloted basis. For example, a group of Year 10 high attaining pupils in technology is piloting a dual accreditation in GCSE, the success of which is being measured against very demanding targets.

14. The leadership and management of subjects are particularly strong in English, art, modern languages, physical education, special educational needs and technology. In other areas the

weaknesses are in the tracking of pupils' progress against departmental targets and the monitoring of classroom activity. For example, in mathematics, humanities and science little use is made of national benchmarks to determine either individual performance by pupils or by teachers. As a result, the development of teachers is not sufficiently focused and leading to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and in examination results. Key staff responsible for the welfare and guidance of pupils are effective and the pastoral support for pupils is good.

15. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. All procedural requirements are in place, such as a committee structure and minutes of meetings. Governors meet all statutory requirements except in ensuring that there is a daily act of collective worship, and in the provision of information about pupils with special educational needs in the Governors' annual report to parents. Governors are aware of a range of good features regarding the school. For example, they are very clear about the importance of good behaviour, the place of the school in the community, the popularity of the school with pupils entering secondary education and external awards such as the Technology College initiative. They are less clear about the future direction of the school or about those aspects of the school where improvement is needed such as inconsistencies in examination results across subjects. They have, however, responded to the issues raised in the last inspection and improvement has been good.

16. There are some good systems in place to monitor school performance. These include the annual review of examination data, checking of teachers' planners and a very secure system of appraisal that forms the basis for performance management. The school has taken effective action in some areas of weakness by encouraging the sharing of skills between teachers. For example, the head of physical education observed lessons in technology prior to the introduction of GCSE courses in physical education; and the literacy co-ordinator has worked effectively with teachers in art to develop materials to support pupils' development. The senior team and some middle managers observe lessons regularly within the performance management programme and have been involved in training to set developmental targets and monitoring milestones for staff. This remains an area for development across the school as there is inconsistency in the rigour with which these systems are implemented.

17. Strategic expenditure is well embedded in development plans across the school and funding from external initiatives such as the Technology College and Excellence in Cities programmes are well focused on improving attainment. Other funding, such as for pupils with special educational needs, is deployed appropriately. The headteacher is accomplished at ensuring sound value for money, seeks out new sources effectively and relates strategic development to specific targets.

Relationships across the school are very good and pupils have good attitudes to their learning.

18. In more than 80 per cent of lessons seen the response of pupils was good, very good or excellent. It was less than satisfactory in just two lessons. There were 25 per cent of lessons seen where attitudes and behaviour were very good and 12 per cent where it was excellent. This is more than is normally observed and reflects the positive atmosphere in the school and the very good relationships between all staff and pupils.

19. Pupils' learning is greatly enhanced by this positive environment. It encourages both pupils and teachers to take risk and embrace challenge. For example, Year 8 pupils in art were designing a city vehicle that could drive, fly, hover and walk up walls! They were encouraged by the enthusiasm of the teacher to be creative and imaginative, and were regularly reminded that 'art is not engineering – it does not have to work!' The pupils engaged readily and joyously in their task. They worked with intellectual rigour and produced remarkable outcomes. Throughout the lesson there was noise, but it was the controlled noise of pupils heavily engaged in challenging and stimulating activity.

20. Pupils benefit significantly from a tutorial system across the school that provides support and guidance on all matters related to the personal development of pupils. Behaviour is well supervised and pupils know what is expected of them. There is an open and honest approach to problems, which encourages pupils to share their concerns. Teachers and other staff provide good role models and encourage through their own behaviour a friendly and helpful atmosphere in the school. The Personal and Social Education programme is well structured to include topics such as drug awareness, health education and similar issues relevant to the lives of the pupils.

21. The personal development of pupils is well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including visits abroad and residential experiences. Year 7 pupils stay at a residential outdoor pursuits centre in North Wales as part of their induction into the school. There are several opportunities for pupils to travel abroad with the school, including exchange trips in modern languages. The termly newsletter celebrates pupils' enjoyment and involvement in a very wide range of activities within the school. These include Science Week, a ski trip, a drama production, the school Valentines dance and the displays of art produced by talented pupils working with visiting artists.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Some aspects of school performance require more structured monitoring and evaluation. These include teaching and learning, the provision for pupils' spiritual development, the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and the use of ICT across the curriculum.

22. There are some good systems for monitoring school performance but they are not applied with sufficient rigour or consistency across all areas. The quality of teaching and learning varies across subjects and within subjects. This has resulted in variations in examination results over the last three years with only English and physical education achieving a consistent improvement in standards during this time. The school needs to review the policy and guidelines on monitoring teaching and learning to ensure frequent and regular observations of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, surveys of parent and pupils' views on how well they are doing and checking of teachers' planning documents. The collection of this information should be monitored against time targets and agreed milestones to indicate success. Training is needed to ensure that rigour is embedded in the systems. There is already an established and firm foundation of trust and confidence that has been previously built by the senior team and the majority of staff accept and enjoy the consultative approach which makes them more involved in raising standards.

23. Action taken by senior team and governors has not yet been fully effective in bringing about consistent improvements. The headteacher and senior team is aware of the strengths and areas for development in the school. However because the monitoring in some areas is not sufficiently systematic, the information collected is not sufficiently detailed to allow extensive evaluation. This means that some areas of weak performance have not been addressed effectively. For example, standards in science, history and technology have fallen over the last three years and pupils have done less well in geography and religious education when compared to national expectations, over the last four years.

24. There is a lack of rigour in the strategic planning and the school development plan needs review. Subject development plans are linked to the school plans and external programmes such as the Technology College initiative and Excellence in Cities are also loosely linked to the school plans. The school acknowledges that they have learnt from the process of bidding for external funds and that the school development plans need to be more clearly focused. Currently the school development plan lacks clarity in the way it links subjects to whole-school areas for development. It does not quantify targets sufficiently well to allow measurements of success.

25. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is less secure than that for moral, social and cultural development. The governors do not fulfil their statutory duty to provide a daily act of collective worship. The time spent in registration at the start of each morning is not always used effectively and there is no programme for spiritual reflection during these sessions. Although good assemblies were observed during the inspection, not all had a spiritual element and there is no policy to ensure that subjects consider the spiritual development of pupils in their schemes of work.

26. Pupils' literacy skills are well developed in English. A literacy co-ordinator has been recently appointed and has begun to work effectively on a gradual basis with other departments in the preparation of materials to support the development of skills across the school. A fine example was observed in the Year 8 Cityscapes project in art. Key words are often displayed on classroom walls and some teachers are using writing frames, group debate and question and answer sessions in their lessons. However, the literacy policy is not yet embedded in all schemes of work and there is no system to monitor the effectiveness of literacy strategies across the school. A similar situation occurs for the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Although pupils are competent in the use of ICT, few subjects are contributing to the overall development of these skills. The school needs to review the policies, guidance and monitoring of the development of pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The school needs to further develop the use of assessment data and national benchmarks to assist in the review of subject performance and the overall progress of pupils.

27. The progress made by pupils in individual subjects is monitored within the subjects satisfactorily. Records are maintained and progress reviewed. There is regular feedback to both pupils and parents. In Year 11, pupils are working towards individual targets guided by their tutors. Assessment records are used well in most subjects to group pupils on the basis of prior attainment from Year 7. The school has recently installed electronic systems that will enable all records of pupils' progress to be held centrally, replacing the individual subject systems in place currently. However, this system is at the early stages of development. The present arrangements do not allow

rigorous analysis of the progress of individual pupils or groups of pupils. The role of the tutors in monitoring the academic progress of individual pupils is yet to be fully developed. The school does not make enough use of the results from national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 to determine the potential of pupils when they first enter the school.

28. National benchmarks are not yet used to full effect in the school in order to make comparisons of school performance. Some staff are aware of the appropriate documents and the annual review of subjects is increasing their knowledge of target setting and performance management. Governors are not sufficiently aware and do not play the part of the 'critical friend' with sufficient rigour. For example, while governors generally know the overall targets for the 'gold standard' of A*-C across the school they are not aware of the contribution made by different subjects to that target. The school has reliable data about National Curriculum test results at age 11 only for all pupils who have entered the school over the last two years. This means that the individual progress of pupils cannot be tracked with any degree of accuracy from the beginning to end of a Key stage. The school introduced testing using nationally recognised schemes several years ago and these form the basis of a target-setting programme in Years 10 and 11, with plans to extend it lower down the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain and develop further the standards of attainment and achievement, the governors, headteacher and senior staff should:

- Improve systems for monitoring and evaluating all areas of school performance particularly;
(*Paragraphs: 20 – 24*)
 - * Teaching and learning;
 - * Provision for spiritual development;
 - * Development of basic skills across the curriculum;
 - * in order to ensure that sufficient effective action is taken to bring all areas of school performance up to the standard of the very best in the school.

- Make rigorous use of assessment data including national benchmarks;
(*Paragraphs: 25 – 26*)
 - * To identify possible areas of strength and weakness at whole-school, subject and classroom levels;
 - * To improve and extend the system for setting clear targets for progress for all pupils based on these analyses;
 - * To use assessment information more effectively to determine the needs of individual pupils and direct the teaching towards meeting those needs.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	13	38	33	8	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	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1103	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	146	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	28	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	225	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance 1999/2000

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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	131	93	224

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	100	88	100
	Girls	82	71	71
	Total	182	159	171
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81(68)	71 (70)	76 (62)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43(33)	43 (39)	42 (31)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	88	82
	Girls	72	75	63
	Total	157	163	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (73)	73 (72)	65 (61)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (30)	45 (44)	36 (32)
	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	101	106	207

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	60	101	101
	Girls	65	104	105
	Total	125	205	206
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	60 (61)	99 (97)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	1090
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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	6	1
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: Y11-13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y11- Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	229

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2659429.00
Total expenditure	2675089.00
Expenditure per pupil	2417.00

Balance brought forward from previous year	171692.00
Balance carried forward to next year	156032.00

**Deployment of teachers:
Y11-Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.1
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**Average teaching group size:
Y7- Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.4
Key Stage 4	20.5

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1103
Number of questionnaires returned	548

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	53	9	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	50	3	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	52	4	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	57	18	4	1
The teaching is good.	39	55	3	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	51	15	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	41	8	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	34	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	21	54	17	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	43	47	5	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	5	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	51	12	1	6