

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DEARNE HIGH SCHOOL

Goldthorpe Road, Goldthorpe,
ROTHERHAM S63 9EW

BARNSLEY LEA

Unique reference number: 106656

Headteacher: Mr P G Shenton

Reporting inspector: Mr John Law
[RgI's OIN - 2056]

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 April 2000

Inspection number: 189503

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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: Goldthorpe Road
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Appropriate authority: Barnsley

Name of chair of governors: Councillor P Bird

Date of previous inspection: 7 October 1996

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Ian Anniss	Team inspector	PE Dance	4 How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? 5 How well does the school care for its pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Dearne High is a mixed comprehensive school educating 1191 pupils in the 11-16 age range. Overall attainment on entry to the school is very low in relation to national standards. The majority of pupils attending the school live in an area serving three former mining communities in what was the heart of the South Yorkshire coalfield. The area remains very disadvantaged socially and economically with considerable unemployment and much poor housing. Many children and their families suffer from low aspiration and poor self-esteem. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The school has no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds nor with English as an additional , rather than the first language. The proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs is 31.6 per cent which is well above the national average. There are 59 pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs which also represents a much higher proportion than usual. The school operated on two sites until last year. A £4 million building programme to extend and upgrade the remaining site has provided much improved accommodation but in doing so has caused twelve months of severe disruption to the learning environment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Dearne High is an improving school with some notable strengths. Through the very good leadership and a commitment to raising standards the school provides good quality of teaching and learning. This success is evident in the good standards most pupils achieve in relation to their prior attainment and in their positive attitude to school. However, because of the poor levels of attendance the overall effectiveness of the school is only satisfactory. The headteacher and governors are determined to raise attendance levels. They have set challenging targets for improvement which can be achieved if parents and local employers work with school staff to overcome the damaging attitudes towards education and work which have become rooted within part of the community. The school has the capacity to become a more effective school and gives satisfactory and improving value for money.

What the school does well

- During their time in school most pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics; English, history, geography are also strong subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching is good and a fair proportion of teaching is very good or excellent.
- The management of the school is very good and the headteacher provides strong leadership.
- The governors are very effective in helping the school to improve.
- Financial management is very good.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is good and is well planned.
- There is a very good system for tracking pupils' progress and personal development.
- The school cares very well for its pupils and its range of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Relationships and partnerships with local primary schools are a very strong and positive feature.

What could be improved

- The poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils reduces the effectiveness of the school.
- The proportion of pupils who gain higher grades in GCSE.
- Standards of achievement in science at both key stages.
- The quality of provision for information technology.
- The quality of some teaching in modern foreign languages.
- The use of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.
- The use of the learning centre as an effective study resource for pupils.
- The level of technical support for some practical subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996. It has made satisfactory improvement overall and in some areas it has improved well. Well-planned practices underpin its strong commitment to do even better. The leadership of the school is more effective and has raised the quality of teaching and learning. This has not yet resulted in better GCSE results. However, a challenging target to increase by eight per cent the proportion of pupils gaining 5A*-C grades this year is realistic and achievable. The school has responded effectively to most of the key issues from the previous inspection. A literacy policy is in place and a numeracy policy is ready to follow. A better range of opportunities is provided for pupils to choose their own best ways of working. The provision for spiritual development has been improved but the school has not yet found a way of fulfilling the statutory requirement for daily worship. There is evidence that the school is working more closely with parents in attempting to tackle the damaging attitudes which a minority of pupils have towards education but this has not yet resulted in significant lasting improvement in attendance levels. The reliability of bus services remains a problem. The spending on learning resources is now effectively managed. The school now stands on a single site and a £4 million building programme has significantly improved the accommodation for learning.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at age 16 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	D	Well above average A Above average B average C Below average D Well below average E

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is very low. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory or good progress in almost all subjects. Attainment by the end of both key stages is well below the national averages. However, attainment for the past three years has been mainly in line with similar schools, and frequently above. Last year's GCSE results were an exception and fell below. This year attainment in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE are predicted to improve significantly. This is justified both in the quality of work seen in pupils' books and folders and in the improvements in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The school has achieved its targets for the past two years and has set challenging but achievable targets for 2000 to 2003.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have positive attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good both in lessons and around school.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development is good. Relationships are also generally good and this is one of the factors supporting pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: attendance levels remain well below national averages.

The school is a harmonious community with a positive learning ethos. The majority of pupils enjoy the opportunities that they are given to achieve academically and personally. Progress is enhanced by this positive culture. There are pockets of misbehaviour which undermine standards in a minority of lessons. The pupils' social development is very good and is very effectively taught through a range of subjects. The very good range of extra-curricular activities also improves personal development. Most pupils have a real affection for the school and they attend regularly. However, a significant minority have a poorer attitude to their education and fail to attend regularly. This seriously hinders the school's attempts to raise standards.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and this is a major factor in enabling pupils to learn effectively in a high proportion of lessons. In 94 per cent of lessons teaching is at least satisfactory and in 60 per cent it is good or better. In one in five lessons it is very good or excellent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in 6 per cent of lessons and within this there is a very small proportion of poor teaching. The teaching quality has improved since the last inspection. Examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching were seen in every subject. In many subjects, including English, history, geography, music, drama, and vocational courses teaching is of a consistently high quality. However, in a few subjects, particularly modern foreign languages, teaching quality is more mixed, ranging from excellent to poor. In English the quality of teaching is satisfactory, often better and occasionally excellent. In mathematics it is generally satisfactory with a significant proportion of good or very good teaching. The overall quality of teaching in science is good. However, it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The teaching in this school has strengths that far outweigh its weaknesses. Teachers are enthusiastic, highly committed and very hard working. These qualities are particularly noted and praised by pupils and their parents. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The teaching of basic skills is also satisfactory though the contribution of the different subjects is uneven.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: provision goes a long way to meeting current thinking There are a few weaknesses [see below].
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is currently satisfactory and is improving rapidly.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: pupils are given very good opportunities for social development, good opportunities for moral and cultural development and satisfactory opportunity for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: welfare and guidance are strengths of the school.

The school has a good, relevant curriculum, matching current thinking. Key Stage 4 is particularly good, offering a wide range of GCSE and GNVQ courses which are popular and motivate pupils. They also benefit from strong links with primary schools and a very good range of extra-curricular opportunity. There is good equality of opportunity. There are weaknesses with the arrangements for information technology in Years 9 and 11 and art at Key Stage 3. Provision for special educational needs is currently satisfactory. It has some weaknesses but is improving rapidly. Provision for pupils' personal development is good. The monitoring of progress is also good as are procedures to protect children and ensure their health and safety. Procedures to tackle the rare instances of bullying are effective. The school is approachable and has an improving partnership with parents, though this is not yet effective in tackling unsatisfactory attendance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: the school is very well led by the headteacher and senior staff who are moving the school forward. Middle managers are also very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	With close care and attention: governors fulfil their duties well. They provide strong and valued support. Almost all legal requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: there is a thorough analysis of all aspects of performance and relevant planning is directed towards priorities for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Effective: the school's income is low but the money is spent wisely. Means of ensuring best value for money are good. The school is providing satisfactory and improving value for money.

These aspects are a key strength of the school. Strong leadership and very good management contribute significantly to recent improvements in teaching and learning. The school has a positive feel about it and a palpable capacity to bring about improvement in standards. Procedures for self-evaluation and setting targets for improvement are thorough and well planned. The school is held well to account by governors. Accommodation is good and resources have improved but are still needed in greater quantity in some subjects. Staffing resources are mainly good but teachers' absence is causing problems and technical support is insufficient in some areas.

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 expects their child to work hard, behave well and achieve his or her best • The teachers are caring, hardworking and give pupils a lot of extra help • The school is well led and managed • The school has a positive and happy culture • The school is a listening school; parents feel comfortable about approaching staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setting of homework in some subjects. • The punctuality of pupils at the start of the school day. • The behaviour of pupils on school buses.

Inspectors generally agree with the parents' positive views about the school. In terms of the issues for improvement identified by parents: inspectors agree about homework, which is set inconsistently in a small minority of cases, though practice was found to be good in most subjects. The punctuality of a significant number of pupils causes problems at the start of the school day, though this is often due to continuing difficulties with public transport. There is some misbehaviour by pupils on school buses. This is in contrast to the good behaviour in school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Background

1 The attainment of pupils at the start of secondary school is well below national expectations in all three core subjects. A high proportion of pupils start school with significant weaknesses in the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. The majority have lower than average reading ages. This situation has existed for many years and applies to all year groups currently attending the school. The range of attainment is also adversely affected by the annual loss of many of the more able children to another school in a neighbouring authority. There are signs, however, that this trend is beginning to diminish as the school image improves and the trust and commitment of more local families are retained. The pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress at each key stage and standards overall rise to nearer average levels by the end of the key stages. This good progress is made because they are taught well and given the opportunities, encouragement and support to succeed. Clear improvements have been made in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Although there are differences between standards in given subjects, the overall pattern is that of a school in which, given its context of an intake with very low ability, standards are at least what could be expected and often exceed expectations. Inspection evidence suggests that secure structures are in place to bring about further improvement in pupils' achievements.

2 At the time of the previous inspection results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below national averages in all of the core subjects. In GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils obtaining the higher grades was well below national averages, though the school had been improving in line with national trends. Girls' GCSE results were better than boys and by a bigger margin than was the case in most other schools. In classes the overall standards of attainment were below expectations for age at the end of both key stages. Literacy and numeracy skills were weak. This hindered progress in other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs attained well in relation to their capability and progressed well.

National Tests and Examinations

3 In 1999 pupils' results in National Curriculum tests were well below the national average for the percentage reaching the nationally expected level in all three of the core subjects. Similarly in all three subjects the percentage reaching level 6 or above was well below the national average in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments. However, in comparison to schools with similar numbers of pupils taking free school meals, pupils at The Dearne High are doing well in mathematics tests since standards are above those of other schools. In English tests standards are in line with similar schools. In both of these subjects there has been improvement in standards since the previous inspection which is in line with the national trend. Inspection findings confirm that the management of these faculties and the quality of teaching and learning have improved in recent years and that these are the reasons for improvements in standards. In science pupils' attainment in tests is well below the average for similar schools and shows a worsening trend when compared to trends nationally. The school recognises that this subject is performing well below expectations and has carried out major steps to rectify this. A new head of faculty was appointed in 1998, the level of resourcing has been improved, and the Key Stage 3 course has been changed. However, for the past year the quality of science teaching and learning has been adversely affected by the building programme and very high levels of staff absences.

4 Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 in the other National Curriculum subjects shows variation between them. Taking into account teachers' assessments, test and examination results, and the observation of the quality of pupils' work in lessons, attainment in geography and history is in line with national expectations. This indicates very good progress in these subjects for pupils of all abilities and is a consequence of very good teaching and very skilful planning of course content. In art, RE, drama, and some elements of physical education (PE) standards are approaching those seen nationally. This also represents good progress for the majority of pupils in these subjects. In French, design technology, music and information technology (IT) the majority of pupils are not meeting national expectations though progress is at least satisfactory in the majority of lessons. The girls reach higher standards than do boys at this key stage apart from in IT.

5 GCSE results have not improved since the last inspection and in the latest year, 1999, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades was worse. In 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C or GNVQ equivalent was well below the national average, as has been the case for the last three years. This applies both to boys and girls. In 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-G or GNVQ equivalent was also well below the national average. This has been the case for the last three years and applies both to boys and girls, though the performance of boys reflects the national pattern and lags behind that of the girls. Over the same period the trend in the school's average total GCSE/GNVQ points score was well below the national trend in improvement, mainly due to the much lower set of results in 1999. Until last year standards at the end of Key stage 4 had been better. In 1998 pupils' results in GCSE were above the average for similar schools. The school is disappointed, though not surprised, by the 1999 GCSE results. The pupils' prior attainment at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 and information provided by commercially produced assessment systems predicted that GCSE results would be lower. Furthermore, when the relative attainment on entry is taken into account the performance of this cohort is not significantly worse than in previous years. Parents and staff are of the view that the severe disruption caused by the move onto one school site and a prolonged bus strike were also contributory factors. The continuing unsatisfactory levels of attendance in all year groups are a major hindrance to the school's efforts to raise standards in GCSE examinations.

6 The school uses performance tracking information supplied by Durham University. This enables the school to see which subjects are most effective in helping their pupils to achieve good standards. A similar calculation is carried out by OFSTED. Combining the two analyses in 1999 there were particular strengths in GCSE expressive arts, geography, history, business studies, communication studies and statistics. Results in these subjects, although still below, are closer to the national levels. Furthermore, pupils achieve better GCSE results in these subjects than in the others that they study. Results are also good in GNVQ courses, particularly in art and design which where pupils' results were better than the national average. In English, English literature, mathematics, design technology, music and drama, GCSE results are below national averages but in line with pupils' ability and show satisfactory and often good progress. Last year French GCSE results were poor, though only a very small proportion of pupils was entered for the GCSE examination. Science is the weakest core subject at this key stage with GCSE results well below the national average and much lower than in the other core subjects. Once again this is related to staffing and accommodation difficulties. The head of faculty is extensively supported by the school management team in trying to improve standards.

Standards as seen in the inspection

7 Achievement seen in the lessons reinforces the above picture of attainment given by the examination results, but promises some improvements where very good teaching is leading to rising achievement in many subjects. Standards reached in science lessons by pupils now in Key Stage 3 although still below national expectations overall are at least in line with those of similar schools and show evidence of satisfactory progress. More able pupils show good powers of deduction and skilful use of specialist terminology. Middle ability pupils can make accurate predictions and could competently and safely follow instructions when investigating. Standards reached in science by pupils currently in Key Stage 4, whilst still below national expectations are in line with similar schools and show evidence of satisfactory progress. Work in English confirms standards to be below national expectations in all areas of this subject at both key stages, but showing particular improvement in the extent and quality of finished writing for formal coursework and examination. This work is close to national expectations. Lowest and highest attaining pupils are making good progress. Middle attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress. Boys make good progress in the experimental single sex grouping in Year 9, but there is little progress in widening attitudes and challenging stereotypical responses. In mathematics attainment is below national expectations at both key stages. The most able pupils make good progress through challenging teaching and high expectations. Average ability pupils make satisfactory progress but could sometimes be further challenged with more demanding work. Less able pupils make slower progress due to their lack of confidence with basic skills.

8 In modern foreign languages standards seen in lessons and in pupils' work show a very significant improvement on past years in both key stages. Most pupils attain below national expectations but can generally communicate well enough to be understood in both speaking and writing. They understand spoken French better than written French. Higher attaining pupils achieve national expectations in each of the four skill areas. The vast majority of the Year 11 group is to be entered for the GCSE examination. Estimates of the grades they are likely to achieve, based on the marks they have gained to date, show that, although still below the national average, a much higher percentage of pupils are expected to gain A* to C grades. In geography and history at Key Stage 3 work in lessons shows that the majority of pupils are now achieving standards in line with national expectations. The foundations for improving standards in GCSE are being put into place. Pupils of all abilities enjoy drama and standards in lessons are close to the national expectation in improvisation and response, but below expectation in some aspects of performance, particularly the use of voice and stagecraft. Pupils also enjoy art and are enthusiastic about their work. Most reach national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3 but there is insufficient time to develop drawing skills and this constrains progress. In design and technology pupils progress satisfactorily at Key Stage 3 but do not reach national expectations. Design folders show a good range of presentation skills, and pupils' practical skills improve further during Key Stage 4, especially in the GNVQ catering and art and design courses. In information technology standards of work are below the average achieved by pupils nationally. Some pupils have a very basic level of knowledge and skill, being unable to carry out procedures such as accessing programmes and saving work. The majority are making sound progress within the new scheme of work. At Key Stage 4 the majority of pupils have had insufficient previous teaching and experience of IT to enable them to achieve the standards expected at this stage. Standards are higher in the GNVQ IT course where some individual pupils have produced some very well presented books to support reading in local primary schools. Standards of attainment in religious education, are slightly below the expectations of the Barnsley Agreed Syllabus at both key stages.

Targets

9 The school has set challenging targets for Year 2000 which will need an increase of 8 per cent in pupils gaining five A*-C grades to be reached. The targets are based on thorough analyses of past performance by both the school's and commercial assessments. The level of attention paid to the achievement of various ability groups is very high. Analyses are rigorous and information is passed on effectively to faculties. The school is justified in its confidence in predicting that it will meet its GCSE target for 2000. The inspection endorses the expectation of improved results. Improved performance is being secured by the wide range of effective methods the school has put in place for raising achievement.

Literacy

10 The influence of an effective policy to improve pupils' literacy skills can be seen in many subjects. Pupils are becoming more confident and competent in speaking, reading, writing and listening and standards of literacy are gradually improving. Literacy standards though still below average by the end of Key Stage 3 are much improved and pupils show particularly good progress with reading and writing. Boys are making slower progress than girls in this respect. This good progress continues throughout Key Stage 4.

11 Pupils' skills in listening and speaking are developing well. There is effective teaching of important terminology and pupils receive some good examples of the best way to communicate to different audiences in mind. Higher and middle attaining pupils can answer questions clearly and confidently in class but fewer pupils speak at length or develop an idea orally. Some middle and lower attaining pupils cannot sustain concentration within group work and lack confidence to express themselves clearly. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in many subjects and, with assistance, are able to express their own thoughts and ideas. Standards improve in Key Stage 4. In many subjects particularly in history, geography, English, RE and drama pupils were able to show a good degree of skill in preparing and making oral presentations. Almost all pupils can join in conversations in French and can write short passages, for example giving details about themselves, well enough to be readily understood. In history Year 7 pupils were able to explain how their prior perceptions of native Americans had changed as a result of their studies, and gave reasons for this, referring to historical sources. These examples represent a good level of achievement given the level of pupils' literacy skills on entry to the school.

12 Skills in reading are also developed satisfactorily in some subjects. There is a good range of opportunities to read and understand poetry and prose in English. The department has developed a particularly good range of comprehension assignments and useful resources to help pupils understand the language of Shakespeare by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils' folders show good evidence of note-taking being developed into more extended writing. Comparative book reviews in a top set of Year 8 showed lively, humorous touches and good awareness of the purpose and audience for the chosen books. Pupils expressed enjoyment of their own choice of books and gave good reasons for their preferences. Teachers encourage pupils' wider reading and there is a good range of fiction and non-fiction in several subjects that is well used by some pupils. However, the inadequacy of the book stock in the study centre limits the availability of a wider range of reading material for many pupils.

13 The range of writing skills is wide. Higher attaining pupils are able to write accurately and at length by the end of Key Stage 3 and continue to develop these skills well so that by the end of Key Stage 4 they write with a good degree of assurance and accuracy. Good narrative and descriptive writing was evident in a range of GCSE and GNVQ course folders. Middle and lower attaining pupils

are less confident but they are usefully supported by a range of sharply targeted methods for improving writing.

Numeracy

14 More able pupils achieve a basic level of numeracy that enables them to progress in all subjects. They are able to accurately recall number facts, and use trigonometric ratios to solve problems and solve quadratic equations. In Year 11 the most able pupils can use algebra to simplify algebraic fractions, solve quadratic equations and draw quadratic graphs using transformations. In geography, science and design and technology they competently use a range of skills in measuring length, weight and volume, and in collecting and presenting data. Pattern work, including symmetry and enlargement is developed in art and design. Most pupils can also use percentages, decimals and ratios. The least able pupils can calculate simple areas and volumes using formulae and construct bar charts and pictograms and they can calculate with percentages, construct triangles and calculate areas of circles. In all years, however, lower attaining pupils lack confidence in basic arithmetic skills which restricts their progress in mathematics and other subjects. The mathematics department is playing a key role in developing a whole school numeracy policy. A successful numeracy summer school for pupils moving from primary to secondary school was held during summer 1999 and will be repeated in 2000.

Special Educational Needs

15 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages. Though their attainment is still significantly below expected standards in most subjects their achievements are satisfactory and often good. Additional support for pupils with Statements is effective in almost all lessons. Individual education plans lack the specific targets needed to assess progress effectively on an individual basis.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes

16 The attitudes to school of a large majority of pupils are good. At both key stages most are keen to attend and they display a keenness to work. They have an affection and loyalty towards school holding it in high esteem. Most pupils work hard, are co-operative and make good use of their opportunities for learning. They respond positively to their teachers, usually listening attentively and trying to meet their expectations. Most of the time they show interest and the ability to concentrate well, particularly in lessons where careful planning has resulted in setting of well-prepared and stimulating work. They work well in pairs and in small groups where they actively encourage and support each other. This was particularly evident in English, drama and some modern languages lessons where constructive feedback to each other encouraged improved performance. Given the opportunity, pupils share their knowledge and actively support the less confident in scientific investigation, dance activity, and when using computers. Most pupils are confident in tackling their work; they readily answer questions and most participate fully in discussions, though in some lessons where teachers' questioning technique was less effective lower ability pupils were more reticent. Pupils are proud of their achievements and try hard to complete tasks set. Where this is not so it is often associated with poor attendance records. Many enjoy having their work displayed and showing it to visitors. A few pupils take little responsibility for their work, rarely take a positive stance in lessons and occasionally disrupt the work of others. This was invariably within the minority of unsatisfactory lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, mainly in science or modern foreign languages.

17 All pupils from the broad range of ability groups are valued equally and there was no discernible difference in their motivation to learn. Pupils with special educational needs have a positive attitude to school. They work hard in lessons with very little evidence of poor behaviour even where their special need is one of emotional and behavioural difficulty. They are able in most cases to maintain their concentration and acquire help when it is needed. They respond well to the presence of their learning support assistants and are fully integrated into the life of the school

18 Behaviour in lessons is generally good and this has a positive impact on progress and achievement. A few pupils, mainly boys, do not value their education sufficiently. They are immature and lack self-discipline, resulting in their being disruptive and sometimes rude to teachers. Some parents are concerned about this poor behaviour. However, where such behaviour occurs it is usually dealt with well and rarely results in any appreciable interruption to the learning of others. Behaviour around the school is also mainly good and this results in safe movement around the site. The school building has narrow corridors and staircases, which demand common-sense behaviour and orderliness. The pupils respond well. However, there are instances of pupils wasting time between lesson changes and arriving late for the start of lessons, thus restricting their own and others' ability to fully take advantage of the learning opportunities provided.

19 Pupils have a good understanding of teachers' expectations and consider them to be fair. These expectations are reinforced consistently by staff. The incidence of exclusion, though high in relation to similar schools, is declining and is much lower than in the previous inspection. Exclusion is a result of consistently applied criteria and is a sanction reserved for those pupils who fail to respond to other measures the school employs for serious breaches of the behaviour code. The period of exclusion is kept to a minimum duration wherever possible and pupils are reintegrated appropriately. Parents are fully involved whenever possible. Pupils are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy and of the procedures to follow. Parents and pupils confirm there is very little bullying and when it does occur incidents are taken very seriously and fully investigated. This helps younger pupils settle happily and confidently when they start school in Year 7. The school is treated with respect by pupils and is virtually free of any graffiti or damage. There is, however, a significant problem of litter within the grounds which is a source of some concern to the school community.

Personal Development

20 The personal development of pupils is good. There are various opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility and demonstrate initiative as they move up through the school. Response to the opportunities provided to take responsibility for school routines is very positive. Prefects go about their duties in a mature and responsible manner. The student council, although a relatively new venture, is supported well by pupils and those holding office show high levels of commitment to improving the school and its environment. For example the council recently devised incentive schemes for pupils in an attempt to tackle the litter problem in the school. Opportunities provided by the PSE programme result in good levels of social awareness and an understanding of community issues both in school and beyond. The participation of pupils of all attainments and age groups in a wide range of extra-curricular activities is good. Many value the lunchtime and after school provision for 'catching up' and doing homework. Pupils respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others and are attentive to their needs. During the week of the inspection it was the first anniversary of the death of a pupil. The level of care and support the pupils gave to their distressed friends was extraordinary and very moving. High standards of personal initiative were seen in a range of subjects, for example in information technology GNVQ where pupils were seen to initiate work beyond the expectations set for them, and in art and design GNVQ where pupils use initiative and imagination to pursue their own ideas.

Attendance

21 87 per cent attendance is unsatisfactory and below that of similar schools. This is a major problem for the school. Despite massive efforts since the last inspection involving a very wide range of strategies to try and tackle this long-term problem levels of attendance have improved only slightly. This has a negative impact on the attainment and personal development for a significant minority of pupils across both key stages. Unauthorised absence at 2.3 per cent and authorised absence at 10.6 per cent are both well above average for similar schools. The amount of truancy which parents have condoned is unacceptable and a major concern. These negative attitudes to school in large part stem from damaging attitudes to education and work which have become embedded within the disheartened adult community. These attitudes are primarily the result of the socio-economic devastation brought about by the closure of all the working pits in this area of South Yorkshire and are not something which the school on its own can change.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Analysis of Inspection Findings

22 The quality of teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good overall and this is a major factor in enabling pupils to learn effectively in a high proportion of lessons. Of the 208 lessons inspected 94 per cent were found to be at least satisfactory and 57 per cent were good or better. In about one in five teaching is very good or excellent. In 6 per cent of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory and within this there is a very small proportion of poor teaching. The teaching quality has improved since the last inspection. This is due to the effective monitoring programme, some very good appointments in the last two years, purposeful training and the governors' and headteacher's actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning

23 The quality of teaching is equally good at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching were seen in almost all subjects. In many subjects, including English, history, geography, music, drama, and vocational courses teaching is of a consistently high quality. However, in a few subjects, particularly science and modern foreign languages, teaching quality is more mixed, ranging from excellent to poor.

24 In English the quality of teaching is satisfactory, often better and occasionally excellent. There is a greater consistency in teaching within Key Stage 4, but some excellent teaching was observed in Key Stage 3. English teachers have good subject knowledge, present tasks and explanations clearly and show interest and enjoyment in their work. As a consequence pupils work productively and at a good pace.

25 In mathematics the quality of teaching is generally satisfactory or better with a significant proportion of good or very good teaching at both key stages. In a small number of cases lessons taught by supply teachers are unsatisfactory. Mathematics lessons are generally well planned and teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons have a clear focus but learning objectives sometimes need to be more explicit. Expectations are generally high and explanations are usually very clear, ensuring good levels of understanding by pupils. Lessons are generally well timed and the balance between teacher and pupil activities creates a good pace with pupils able to tackle set questions and progress with their learning. Conclusions to lessons are less effective

26 The overall quality of teaching in science is good at both key stages. However, the quality of teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Most science teaching is of a high quality and lessons are well planned, well organised and teachers ensure high expectations for pupils' effort, progress and behaviour. Where science teaching is unsatisfactory this is due to poor planning, low expectations of pupils and failure to challenge unacceptable behaviour effectively. It is within these lessons that pupils waste time, disrupt the learning of others and achieve standards of work which are unsatisfactory.

27 The quality of teaching is generally good in design technology, information technology, geography, drama, RE and music at Key Stage 3. It ranges from satisfactory to excellent in history. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection where the lack of specialist skill adversely affected the quality of teaching in this subject. Teaching is mainly satisfactory in PE and art. The quality of teaching and pupil achievement in art are adversely affected by the shortage of time allocated to the subject at this key stage. In the modern foreign languages faculty the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 ranges from excellent to poor. The excellent and very good teaching is characterised by very lively presentation following the meticulous planning and preparation of a wide range of activities, all of which involve and interest pupils and motivate them to learn. In the lessons where teaching is poor or unsatisfactory work was not well matched to pupils' needs and the pace was inappropriate. Learning was unsatisfactory in these lessons and in some cases so was pupils' behaviour.

28 At Key Stage 4 teaching is generally good or very good in history and geography. Pupils enjoy work in these subjects and there has been significant improvement in attainment since the previous inspection in both. Teaching is also good in drama, music and RE where pupils work hard and are provided with a good range of opportunity to apply physical and creative effort in their work. In design technology, information technology and PE teaching is mainly satisfactory and there is good teaching in about a third of lessons. In modern foreign languages the range of teaching quality is less diverse than at Key Stage 3 and better overall with some excellent lessons. This contributes significantly to the improvement in standards in this subject since the previous inspection. It ranges from satisfactory to excellent in history. In other subjects at Key Stage 4, including vocational courses, the quality of teaching is generally good.

Features and issues in the teaching

29 The teaching in this school has strengths that far outweigh its weaknesses. Teachers are enthusiastic, highly committed and very hard working. These qualities are particularly noted and praised by pupils and their parents. Teachers generally have good knowledge and understanding of their subject which helps them to stimulate pupils to try hard. For example, particularly effective teaching and learning were observed in an English lesson where an investigation of vocabulary linked to war in the context of *The Silver Sword* by Iain Serrallier and musical, visual and conceptual thinking were developed to grasp abstract nouns in human and spiritual ways. Complex technical language was built onto what had been learned before, helping the pupils to use pertinent vocabulary in different types of writing and speech. This strength was also in history and geography when, for instance, the teachers' knowledge covered both the theme of the lesson and the pupils' learning needs to convey the relevant concepts most effectively. The effectiveness of teachers' planning is good at both key stages in most subjects. This is the direct outcome of the effective monitoring by senior and middle managers. Lessons are suitably varied in most cases and the pupils learn well as a result of work that is presented coherently and interestingly. This general good practice is found to a degree in all subjects but is featured especially well in English, geography and history.

30 The effectiveness of the teaching methods reflects the good teachers' planning. Teachers set clear objectives and use methods which support good learning. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in many subjects, notably in English, modern foreign languages, history, geography and drama. These lessons included a very good range of learning activities which actively engage pupils in a variety of stimulating tasks, ensuring that interest and motivation are sustained. As a result pupils of all abilities, including the least and most able, deepened knowledge, increased understanding and experienced first-hand opportunity to gain and practise key skills, such as speaking, writing, designing, making and performing. In the best lessons, of which there are a good number, the success of the school's emphasis on improving the pupils' learning experience is easy to see. In art and design at Key Stage 4, for example, good teaching of design skills gives pupils confidence to work effectively on their own fabrics and textile designs with good imagination and innovation.

31 Teachers expect pupils to have positive attitudes, and to behave and achieve well. In the main pupils meet these expectations because most lessons are challenging and interesting. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils through which they manage their classes effectively. The few exceptions are mainly where the school has had to employ inexperienced and sometimes weak teachers to cover for staff who are on long-term absence. Locally there are major difficulties in recruiting temporary replacement teachers who have the appropriate expertise and specialist skill.

32 A key factor in enabling teachers to appreciate the level of work that pupils are capable of is the systematic way that they assess pupils' progress and effectively link this information to performance benchmarks such as National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. This information, together with that on pupils' prior attainment, is used to set and review targets with each pupil and to ensure that they are working to capacity. Most teachers give clear guidance to the pupils about how they could improve their work in order to meet their targets and raise levels of attainment.

33 In Key Stage 4 assessment and target-setting practices are tightened further through the use of monthly assessments involving teachers in each subject making an assessment on the standards and effort made by the pupils. Information about performance is then used by tutors to ensure that pupils are on course to achieve expected GCSE grades. This has achieved some success in motivating the pupils as Year 10 and 11 pupils and their parents explained to inspectors. The school has not yet experienced the benefit of this investment in terms of improvement as seen in GCSE results or pupils' attendance rates.

34 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and frequently good though subject departments are inconsistent in their ability to manage the teaching of these pupils. Arrangements where pupils are taught in groups of similar ability generally work well, particularly for the very able and the least able pupils. However, the pace and content of some lessons do not cater well for lower attaining pupils, especially where their numeracy skills are weak.

35 Statemented pupils receive good support from classroom support assistants and the liaison between class and support teacher is good. However, in general teachers do not yet plan to meet specific needs by using individual education plans. In some subjects such as history, geography and modern languages lower attaining pupils are making good progress because teachers are planning individual learning targets and use methods and learning resources suitable for them to progress.

Core skills teaching

36 The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall though the contribution of the different subjects to the development of basic skills is uneven. The school has developed a literacy policy which is managed well by most departments, including the core subjects, modern foreign languages, history

and geography. An effective whole school literacy strategy is therefore emerging. This is an improvement in the quality of teaching provision since the previous inspection.

37 The numeracy policy is being developed but is less well established. Therefore, the teaching of numeracy is less well done. Some subjects such as science, geography design technology and vocational courses at Key Stage 4 make a contribution to the reinforcement of the numeracy work covered by the mathematics department.

38 The teaching of information technology is good within the specialist department. The teachers help the pupils to develop skills to apply to the work they do in other subjects. The school has also invested in information technology to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills for pupils with special educational needs. Information technology is well used in geography and design technology and music, but elsewhere too little opportunity is provided for pupils to apply IT in their work. Teachers in many subjects, including mathematics and science, make insufficient contribution to the development of pupils' information technology skills.

Homework

39 A significant minority of parents' questionnaires indicated some dissatisfaction with the setting of homework. Observation of lessons and examination of pupils' work indicated inconsistency in setting homework in only a small minority of cases. Homework is set regularly in most subjects and is used to extend learning and encourage research. Teachers usually check homework carefully picking up pupils who have not completed it and arranging times in school or overnight for pupils to fulfil requirements.

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

Features of the subject curriculum

40 The school has a clear set of curriculum aims. These seek to meet pupils' individual needs, promote equality of opportunity within a broad and balanced provision and prepare pupils for adult life. In the main it succeeds in doing so. Curriculum provision and structure have been reviewed since the last inspection in order to move more closely to reflect these aims and to ensure greater efficiency in the deployment of staff in the context of a declining budget. Block timetabling has been introduced, which allows greater flexibility with groupings of pupils and faculty areas have been given responsibility to determine the most effective system for grouping year groups of pupils into classes for teaching. Many have chosen to set by ability within their subjects, whilst others use mixed ability teaching as the standard grouping arrangement. These arrangements are largely effective in best meeting the individual learning needs and aspirations of pupils within faculties

41 The school day has also been extended to ensure compliance with national recommended timings and the curriculum is provided through a six period day. At Key Stage 4 GNVQ provision has been extended, so that now this provides a course for 20 per cent of the timetable for approximately 50 per cent of the year group. In addition to these structural changes, schemes of work have been effectively reviewed and revised. The overall impact of these changes has been to provide a curriculum that is broad, balanced, relevant and accessible for pupils of all abilities. There are, however, some areas of concern that will need to be tackled. The introduction of a second language, German, for some pupils in Key Stage 3 causes them to miss art lessons, further diminishing time spent on this subject which is already below national averages. This adversely affects the progress and achievement of pupils in this subject at this key stage. Furthermore, the introduction of 50 minute lessons, and in the case of one afternoon lesson 45 minutes, is unhelpful to the development and continuity of learning in

practical lessons. For example in science, art and physical education this has had an impact on standards of achievement.

42 The school meets the statutory requirements for the National Curriculum in all respects except for information technology. The school has recently substantially invested in accommodation and computers to support this work. In Year 11 only the 50 per cent of pupils following the GNVQ IT course receive their full entitlement. The integration of IT within other subjects of the curriculum is inadequate. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed and adjusted its provision of religious education so that it complies in all year groups except Year 11. From September 2000 the school will be fully compliant with statutory requirement in religious education and IT at Key Stage 4.

43 The school development plan has prioritised the raising of standards in literacy and numeracy. Teaching time has been increased in English and mathematics to support this whole-school initiative. A literacy policy is being introduced and summer literacy schools were successfully organised in 1998 and 1999. This will be repeated in the current year. Basic literacy is supported in English through high quality faculty booklets and other subjects of the curriculum are encouraged to focus on specific issues such as technical vocabulary. This work is, however, still in need of further development. For example, there is a need to improve specific word and sentence level teaching in English and to provide more explicit teaching of spelling and reading methods. The school is in the process of developing a numeracy strategy which will be introduced in the near future. A successful numeracy summer school was organised in 1999 and the mathematics department is currently considering strategies to improve numeracy skills.

44 Pupils with special educational needs have access to broadly the same range of curriculum opportunities as their peers, and to the same extra-curricular activities. The school has reorganised the management of special educational needs and the new co-ordinator and her assistant are redeveloping policy and reforming practice. There has been some recent staff training to support this area and considerable progress has been made in a short time. At present setting is used as the main mechanism to match curriculum provision to pupils' needs, with the effective use of curriculum support assistants for pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs. There is evidence of good practice in differentiating provision in mixed ability settings in geography and history and in providing accessible and interesting lessons in lower ability sets in English and French.

45 The relationship that the school has with its primary partner schools is a considerable strength of the school and the progress made within the last two years on liaison and transition is regarded as very good practice by both parents, partner schools and within the local education authority. This work is part of the Barnsley Charter for Transition project which is funded through the Single Regeneration Budget and provides time for teachers to liaise and develop bridging programmes. Under this scheme, primary pupils can spend a day in the secondary school with some specialist subjects taught by secondary teachers and the remainder by the primary staff. Schemes of work have been jointly reviewed to ensure continuity across the key stages and secondary staff in English and mathematics have had the opportunity to observe lessons in primary schools. This year, secondary staff are supporting the implementation of computerised assessment data systems in primary partner schools in order to improve the flow of information on pupil assessments in order to better inform grouping and planning. In addition, there is in-depth discussion about individual pupils prior to transition and written information and guidance is given to parents.

Provision for personal development

46 The curricular provision for pupils' personal development is good. The values and attitudes which are identified, promoted and fostered through the school's ethos and pastoral systems are a strong positive feature of the school. The overall provision for the moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' development continues to be a good feature of the curriculum. A very positive feature of this

provision is the high level of inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in all aspects. There has been some improvement in the provision for pupils' spiritual development since the last inspection.

47 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall with some good features. Since the last inspection there has been considerable thought, work and some training to enable a more clearly focused programme to be taught. Several subjects make a good contribution to spiritual development by providing a range of learning tasks which enable pupils to explore their own values and beliefs. For example in history Year 7 pupils have explored a range of feelings associated with encountering new situations and experiences as part of their study of the native peoples of the Americas, and have been helped to challenge and test the validity of stereotypical images of people of different cultures. In RE lessons at Key Stage 3 pupils develop language and a conceptual framework which enable them to explore and analyse the beliefs and values of others. In geography pupils explore issues to do with industrial location through role play, and through the study of eco-systems they develop understanding of inter-relationships and inter-dependence. In English teaching that inspired awe in the pupils was observed in an investigation of vocabulary in which musical, visual and conceptual thinking were developed to grasp abstract nouns in human and spiritual ways. In many other classrooms inspirational displays stimulate awe and wonder. All of these experiences are supporting learning. Assemblies promote the values of the school. Since the previous inspection the school has extended provision to two assemblies per week for all. There is a policy, with guidelines and termly programmes. Pupils participate in assemblies and through the use of poetry, prayer, presentations and music enables pupils to think about the spiritual theme. This evokes spirituality.

48 The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Many cultures and traditions from around the world are represented in the curriculum. The school promotes an appreciation of cultural diversity as well as pupils' awareness of the nature and roots of their own cultural tradition. The schemes of work in geography and history provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to increase awareness of the cultural origins and practices of both their own and other major ethnic groups. For example in geography in Year 10 pupils considered migration from urban to rural areas and what is meant by the quality of life, different values and positive and negative features. In Year 11 pupils investigated the impact on traditional ways of life and the natural environment of change and development brought about by tourism in Kenya. In drama and art there were good examples of multiculturalism, both planned and emerging naturally. The wide range of extra-curricular activity which pupils participate in provides very good experience of other cultures; for example in PE the regular sports trips and in modern foreign languages the exchanges enrich pupils' cultural experiences. The expressive arts programme enables significant numbers of pupils to perform for audiences beyond themselves. Over the last few years, there have been regular school productions, ensemble productions for small groups and festival work both locally and internationally.

49 The school's promotion of moral development is good and firmly embedded in its aims. Most staff are very good role models in their promotion of high moral standards. There are very good examples of specific emphasis on moral and ethical issues in studying the exploitation of the world's natural resources, and in studies of prejudice, bullying, rights and responsibilities in PSE. The focus on equality of opportunity issues is less obvious, particularly issues of gender and there is too little evidence of tasks and discussions associated with this. Other than this the school is effective in encouraging pupils to relate positively to others and relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils are clearly expected to behave well, care for others and to have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Attitudes of courtesy and respect are strongly encouraged and usually very evident. In particular, pupils listen to each other with respect and they are used to being listened to and respected by staff. The school's objective, that it should be a place where pupils are happy, secure and able to develop their potential is well realised and evident throughout the life of the school. The principle of the school as a mutually supportive community is well developed and facilitated effectively through the pastoral system where pupils are allocated to tutor groups for the duration of their five years at school. This effectively promotes and develops cohesion, the values of the school and citizenship. The presence

of physically disabled pupils in school, and the tolerance their presence creates, serve to make staff and pupils alike extremely aware of physical diversity.

50 The provision for social development is very good. The PSE programme provides extensively for pupils' social development. There is an agreed policy for sex education and this is taught effectively. A good range of planned learning activities in both Key Stages 3 and 4 develop personal values in relation to the self and others. For example group discussions and role play in Year 9 dealing with the topic of alcoholism as part of the good drugs education programme provided opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the nature of a complex social issue. A number of other subjects make a good input to social development, though this is not always deliberately planned. In history in Year 10 pupils enquired into Nazi treatment of German Jews, and used the information to prepare a prosecution case such as could have been used at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal. Year 11 pupils showed good understanding of the Cold War and Arms Race. In art the work of major artists is explored in some depth, increasing awareness of national and world issues - war, cruelty and death. In many lessons there are good opportunities for pupils' development through group work and supporting each other in class activities such as in mathematics, English, modern languages, history, geography and information technology. There are good opportunities to develop co-operative, competitive, team and leadership skills in PE lessons.

Extra-curricular provision

51 One of the strengths of the school's provision for pupils' personal development is the range and quality of its extra-curricular programme. Parents are kept informed of the planned programme through the publication of a yearly booklet and are very positive in their praise for the opportunities provided. Pupils are actively involved in drama and dance clubs and public performances, can access a range of sporting activities and other clubs across the subjects of the curriculum and can represent the school in local and regional competitions in a number of sports. The school has strong links with the Ukraine and a school in France and there are regular exchange trips. Visits within history, geography and related to the careers education and guidance programme are frequent and there are Duke of Edinburgh Award and Young Enterprise schemes. There is a homework club and some pupils have access to the literacy school run by Barnsley Football Club.

52 The extra-curricular programme is illustrative of strong links between the school and its community, which have a beneficial effect on pupils' intellectual and personal development. Local businesses support the school through work placements for Year 10 and, in some cases, sponsorship. Barclays Bank, for example, fund a project which allows older pupils to design and make sample reading books for use with primary age pupils. The school has a careers education and guidance programme within its PSE programme in Years 9, 10 and 11 and support from an external careers consultant who provides group and individual support for pupils in Year 11. There are established links with Barnsley and Dearne Valley Colleges and two local schools with sixth forms. The school has a sound basic provision for careers education and guidance and individual tutors work very hard to support pupils; there is a recognition that more needs to be done to further develop this work. The area the school serves has high rates of unemployment and continuation into further education post-16 is comparatively low. There is a need to raise aspirations amongst the pupil population as a whole and create higher levels of commitment to continued education. The school is, therefore, working towards the achievement of the Quality Award for Careers, Information, Education and Guidance supported by the partnership agreement within the Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham areas. It has also recognised the need to invest in resources for this area and, in particular, improvements to the careers library.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Pastoral aspects

53 The quality of care for pupils is very good. The welfare and personal support of pupils are given high priority by the school managers and staff. Very good arrangements are made to ensure the pupils' health, safety and wellbeing. The pastoral system is valued by parents, pupils and staff and is becoming a strength within the school. Support for individual pupils is provided through a year group system where pupils stay with the same tutor from Year 7 and this results in tutors knowing them, and often their families, very well. This arrangement fits in with the school's aims and culture and works well. Tutors are dedicated, caring and develop close supportive relationships with pupils. They frequently give pupils support and guidance in their own time and were praised by pupils in all year groups. This enables tutors to fulfil very effectively a key role of monitoring and supporting pupils' progress. Heads of year co-ordinate and manage the work of the tutors very proficiently. Communication between tutors, heads of year and other staff is good with concern about individual pupils being dealt with efficiently and effectively and at the appropriate level.

54 The pastoral system has been recently re-organised to give better continuity. The form tutor now has a central role in tracking pupils' progress and is supported by the year team who review overall progress on a half-termly basis. Behaviour and attitude to school work are also closely monitored with a three-level system of individual monitoring according to the severity of the problem. Assemblies to celebrate success, outstanding effort, improved attendance or exceptional progress have been introduced to encourage positive attitudes to school and learning and a culture of achievement. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress and, where necessary, problems. They believe that these support systems are a strength of the school.

Tracking pupils' performance

55 Over the last two years the school has completely overhauled its processes for tracking pupils' progress and for target setting. It now has a coherent and centralised system for collecting and analysing attainment data that is accessible to all staff and used to support individual pupil progress. On entry to the school pupils' Key Stage 2 results are used along with cognitive ability and commercially produced test scores to determine a benchmark and outline targets are set for progress in Key Stage 3. This analysis is also used to help group pupils by ability and identify those pupils who are likely to need additional support. In Year 7 there is a pilot mentoring scheme where form tutors provide on-going support for individually targeted pupils. At Key Stage 4 a similar process is used based on Key Stage 3 results and scores from commercially produced assessment schemes. Targets are set for all pupils and borderline GCSE C/D grade pupils and underachievers are given mentoring support. In Year 8 and 11 all pupils have an interview with the headteacher where targets are discussed and set based on the individual pupils' prior attainment.

56 The centrally held data base not only holds data on attainment but also on attendance and other pastoral information that could have a bearing on a pupil's progress and ability to achieve the targets set. This is a realistic and sensible approach to target-setting given the negative impact that poor attendance, in particular, has on the attainment of pupils across the whole ability range in the school.

Assessment

57 Assessment methods at a subject level have also been improved since the last inspection. All departments have been required to relate their assessment judgements to National Curriculum levels and analysis of how pupils can improve from level to level has been undertaken and is made explicit to pupils. There is a staff training day dedicated to the agreement of levels of attainment in individual pupils' work assessed in terms of National Curriculum requirements. The reporting system has been standardised and simplified to focus on progress against National Curriculum outcomes and pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The degree to which assessment helps shape planning varies across the school and from teacher to teacher. There is good practice in English where pupils are clear about what they need to do to progress and value helpful comments linked to clear guidance for improvement.

58 Overall the school has made good progress with the development of assessment practice and, in particular, the creation of a whole school system for data collection and analysis. It now needs to develop an assessment policy, with clear guidelines for practice, and to continue to work with all departments on improving the way assessment information is used to improve planning and support individual pupil progress.

Arrangements for behaviour, health and safety

59 The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The expectation of good behaviour, positive attitudes and respect for one another permeates relationships at the school and the majority of pupils respond well. The school has an unintrusive code of behaviour which matches the culture and values of a caring school. Many teachers benefit from a framework of intervention which supports them effectively in managing behaviour and enables the pupils to benefit from access to behaviour support staff who supervise them when excluded from lessons for misbehaviour. This works well enabling almost all lessons to proceed without disruption. Procedures for monitoring pupils' behaviour, effort and attitude to work are comprehensive and effective. Alongside a system of merits this provides a structure and motivation for pupils to progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated within the school community with teachers responsive to individual needs. Overall the school is a safe and orderly community.

60 The school has straightforward and well-established procedures for ensuring that the health and safety of pupils are promoted. Procedures for dealing with most day-to-day health and safety issues are documented and distributed to staff. These are evidenced in most of the school's working practice, though the level of maintenance and general housekeeping in some of the technology workshop areas is poor. There is a designated staff member who has defined responsibilities. Risk assessments are in place as appropriate. Medical care for some pupils who need it is provided on site. Arrangements for child protection procedures are very well managed by the senior manager who has oversight of pupil welfare and guidance. He is also the designated child protection officer. Procedures are clear, liaison with external agencies is effective and confidentiality is assured. Staff are informed only on a strictly need-to-know basis.

Attendance measures

61 Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good and the school works exhaustively in its attempts to promote good attendance. Several strategies have had slight success in raising attendance levels. For example the development of an extensive work-related curriculum at Key Stage 4 has benefited some disaffected pupils. Pupils who have had lengthy absence benefit from re-integration programmes to enable them to settle back in. Despite all of this hard work the poor attendance record of some pupils remains a major problem for the school. The school to explore further opportunity for acquiring grants to support school initiatives for tackling problems with attendance. Registration is carried out quickly and efficiently. School procedures for recording absence and monitoring attendance are very efficient and implemented consistently. Heads of year, tutors and most subject teachers monitor individual pupils' attendance rigorously. The school thoroughly follows up absences. However, at the end of the 1999 academic year abrupt changes were made to staffing of the education welfare support officers. This has not, hitherto, benefited the school in its drive to raise attendance levels and reduce truancy.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62 The parents view the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves to be good. Most feel that their children like school and are given the right amount of hard work to do. On the whole they are pleased with the teaching and on how their children progress. There is an effective open door policy: a high proportion of parents feel they can approach the school if difficulties arise and their concerns are listened to and resolved.

63 Parents of children with special educational needs are very happy with the support that their children receive. Parents of pupils with Individual Education Plans are invited to their children's annual review of progress.

64 The impact of the parents' involvement in the school is limited but improving. The school is attempting to involve parents in curriculum based activities but these initiatives are only at an early stage. The support from parents for drama productions is good. They help with costumes, scenery, lighting and make-up. A few parents also give valued support to teachers through their involvement in school visits, sports fixtures, cultural events and residential activities. These activities also draw parents, teachers and pupils together in working towards the educational aims of the school. The parent and teacher association (PTA) has raised funds for educational and school improvement purposes via a range of social events which are well supported by the local community. The association itself, however, lacks active support from parents and it is currently struggling to recruit sufficient members.

65 Attendance at parents' evenings is improving. The home/school contract has been very successfully introduced and has been of benefit to parents in the understanding of the vital role they play in their child's schooling. The school is successful in its determination to contact parents when there is any concern. They are kept well informed of events and other school matters by letters and leaflets from the headteacher and pastoral staff. The school marketing group has been instrumental in improving the quality of communication to parents. Most parents now feel that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. This was confirmed by those parents attending the inspection meeting. However, according to the parents' questionnaires about one in five parents disagree with this statement. These concerns were not borne out by the inspection findings. The school prospectus and governors annual report provide a comprehensive range of data covering provision as well as technical information. Newsletters and other items of correspondence regarding activities and plans ensure parents receive full and proper notice of all that happens at the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

66 The leadership and management of the school have improved since the last inspection, but only recently. A new headteacher was appointed two years ago and the school now benefits from very good leadership which contributes significantly to its popularity and success. Since his appointment the school has started to make progress with improving the quality of several key aspects of education provision. The headteacher and staff are now actively engaged in a wide range of strategies to drive up pupils' standards of achievement. However, this has not yet brought about significant improvement in their attendance rates nor standards of attainment in GCSE. The major disruption experienced by the school converging onto one site amidst a major building programme has had an adverse effect upon this.

67 The headteacher and other senior managers work very well together and share a clear educational direction for the school based upon mutual values. They are approachable and accessible and open to other people's ideas. They encourage quality and high expectations within a climate of achievement and support. This has created a much more positive professional culture in the school in which teachers are supported and encouraged to produce high quality work.

68 The school has a very positive feel about it which starts with the headteacher and senior management team and communicates itself to the pupils through the high expectations that the teachers have of their work, attitudes and behaviour. Management of the school is good at all levels and staff morale is high. There are clear lines of communication and very good relationships between staff. The reasons for decisions are understood and commitment to the school and to improving pupils' standards of achievement is secure.

69 The school has ambitious long-term aims contained within its management plan. Clear, relevant priorities and targets are identified through development planning that now covers a three-year period and includes sections on monitoring and evaluation to ensure monitoring strategies are open and clearly designed to raise standards. Aims within the plan are challenging yet achievable in the light of the school's recent improvements in the quality of education provision. They concentrate on raising standards and preparing pupils for work and life beyond school. They also recognise the need to tackle the effects which deprivation and lack of hope and aspiration within the school's community have upon pupils' attendance and achievement. These aims are very visible in the school's work. Its commitment to good relations and equality of opportunity are palpable in all that the school does and reflected fully in faculty aims and policies.

70 All staff with management responsibilities have detailed job descriptions with key responsibilities clearly stated. The recently revised management structure is well conceived and middle managers understand their delegated tasks and carry them out very capably and effectively. Middle managers are given opportunities to develop their roles in a supportive structure. They readily take these opportunities and make a significant contribution to the leadership and management of the school by developing new practices which improve the quality of education provision. A good example of this can be seen in the planning and management of the revised system for tracking pupils' progress and target setting. This is carefully structured and teachers have implemented this effectively at faculty level. The new system for collecting an archive of exemplar work together with a file of assessed work for every pupil is supporting a consistent and effective assessment and target setting process in most faculty areas. There is an obvious shared commitment to improvement, manifest in the very good teaching, including high expectations of pupils, seen during the inspection.

71 The reason that all the management tiers work so well is the effective management structure coupled with very efficient communication systems. In most weeks, middle managers meet with the senior manager to whom they are responsible in order to discuss progress. The regularity of contact, together with the availability of good quality performance information provides the drive behind the school's improvement strategy. Faculty development plans are now more closely tied to the overall school management plan and careful evaluation of the whole planning process culminates in effective annual staff training days devoted to planning review.

72 The special educational needs team is now well led by an experienced senior manager. She has set clear aims and has started to build effective management systems which will enable the team to achieve them. However she has only been in post a few months and there are some weaknesses in the current arrangements for management of pupils with special educational needs. Support staff are well trained and give good support in lessons to pupils with Statements for Special Educational Needs. Links between the special needs team and faculties are not sufficiently established. Individual education plans in some subjects do not identify measurable targets for pupils, so it is unclear how well each pupil is progressing. The governor for special educational needs gives staff good support in developing provisions.

73 The school is starting to analyse pupils' performance very well and uses information technology effectively in this process. All performance information is shared with staff which results in good continuous professional debate about how improvements can be brought about. The benefits of monitoring by middle management are seen most clearly in the English, mathematics, modern languages and humanities faculties, though satisfactory practice generally exists elsewhere. The monitoring of the effectiveness of tutor lessons is not yet developed. The very good communication between management layers is now being used to develop a strategy where the impact of initiatives can be monitored.

74 Administrative procedures and routines are very good allowing the school to operate smoothly. These measures have a positive effect on the quality of education pupils receive. The office manager and non-teaching staff contribute extensively to the effective administrative procedures. Internal communication is effective through the staff briefings, bulletins and a calendar of meetings at all levels of management. The quality of documentation is good. It is extensive and thorough and gives access to all school policies and procedures.

Governance

75 The governors are highly dedicated to the school and its community. They combine extensive local knowledge with a good understanding of their role and the school's educational systems. This enables them to carry out responsibilities proficiently and to fulfil most of their statutory duties effectively. They provide the headteacher and staff with active support in striving to fulfil the school aims and policies.

76 Relationships between governors and school managers are open and positive. Governors are closely involved at a number of levels with staff and pupils and, as a consequence, the decisions they take regarding future development and the day-to-day business of the school are pragmatic and well informed. Their positive influence upon the major developments in the school's accommodation is a good example of appropriate involvement of governors in planning. They actively argue the school's case for further improvement to facilities. They meet frequently and have a well-organised committee structure dealing with finance, personnel, premises and curriculum matters. Meetings are appropriately focused on important priorities which are drawn from the school's three year management plan. Minutes clearly document the business and the decisions made.

77 Governors have developed relevant and practical policies covering all key areas but some statutory obligations regarding provision of IT and a daily act of collective worship are not fully met. Amongst otherwise broad and successful provision, these shortfalls have an adverse impact on pupils' fullest attainment. By receiving detailed financial reports at each meeting they are able to monitor expenditure carefully and make well-informed budget decisions. A governor has been appointed to oversee special educational needs issues. The work of the governing body has become more effective since the last inspection. The staff and governors have responded positively to a considerable number of changes and curriculum initiatives since the last inspection, whilst maintaining a very positive ethos and purposeful learning environment for all pupils. Action planning in response to the previous inspection report has been well organised, effective and well documented in governors' reports.

Management of resources

78 The school manages its available resources efficiently and responsibly. After two years of stringent financial control the school has a balanced budget with a £50,000 contingency. The headteacher and governors have been very effective in seeking avenues for cost-saving and in raising income during the period of major turbulence and financial uncertainty created by the movement onto one refurbished site

79 Very good financial planning by the senior manager responsible ensures that the income is carefully allocated and well spent to support the school's educational priorities. The school's administration system is computerised and itemised statements of expenditure are produced on a regular basis. The finance manager proficiently organises the day-to-day administration of the school's resources. With the governors finance committee she seeks and efficiently achieves best value principles. Financial records are well maintained. Faculty managers have the main responsibility for management of resources, accommodation and finance within their relevant domain. They do this well. Governors are fully involved in the process of financial planning and are thoughtful and prudent in their approach to budgeting. Accountabilities are well defined. All the recommendations from the most recent auditor's report in 1998 have been implemented.

80 Decision making, in relation to expenditure, undertaken by the senior management team is appropriately influenced by the priorities included in the school development plan. Faculty action plans influence where money is spent, enabling school managers to be more accountable and logical about overall expenditure and financial direction. The inclusion of a finance column within the school management plan also provides a useful link between the priorities for development and available resources. The costing of the school management plan has been improved since the last inspection, though the system used to cost proposed developments in faculty areas varies in detail and quality. Along with the school's evolving system for monitoring of pupils' performance these areas will provide a good basis from which the school can evaluate its own cost-effectiveness.

81 The level of funding made available to the school is low compared to that of similar schools. However, income is being well managed and used very judiciously to fulfil the aims of the school. Specific grants are well applied. A Single Regeneration Budget grant of £40,000 was used to develop the learning centre. Funds for literacy and numeracy summer schools have been successfully acquired and well used for the past two years. The school leased part of the now closed upper site to a local special school and raised £36,000. This money was used to improve spending on learning resources in response to a key issue from the previous inspection. The Standards Fund supports a range of activity including a programme of staff induction. Pupils with special educational needs have classroom support provided from within the school budget and this is used well. The emphasis is on maintaining the high quality of teaching and learning and in the development of technology within the whole school curriculum.

82 The ratio of pupils to teachers is high. However, teaching and support staff are efficiently deployed. In the majority of cases staff attendance is very good which helps to reduce the cost of supply teaching. However, the school has suffered from several long-term staff absences. This not only creates a drain on the school's staffing budget but adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning in several subjects including science, mathematics and RE. Non-teaching staff are well managed and deployed and their work is effective and appreciated. However there is a shortage of technician support in science. Also, the learning centre is underused because it still lacks a full-time manager. Faculty learning resources are carefully and economically managed and the quality of the teaching environment is enriched by the good use of display areas. Increasingly effective use is made of resources used to support the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

83 The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is very low. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory or good progress in almost all subjects. Attainment by the end of both key stages is well below the national averages. However, attainment for the past three years has been mainly in line with similar schools, and frequently above. Last year's GCSE results were an exception and fell below. This year attainment in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE are predicted to improve significantly. This is justified both in the quality of work seen in pupils' books and folders and in the improvements in teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The quality of education provided both in terms of a broad curriculum and teaching is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is good. Attendance is well below the national average despite the intense effort by the school to raise this. It is the school's greatest obstacle to improvement in standards and increased effectiveness. The amount of money provided to fund the education of pupils is low. In the light of all these factors, the school is judged to provide satisfactory and improving value for money.

Staffing

84 The demands of the curriculum are generally well met by the number, qualifications and experience of teaching staff in most subjects. In the main the staff are highly experienced and effectively deployed to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. There are some examples where lessons are taught by qualified teachers who are not specialists in their subject. In the main standards are not adversely affected because teachers are well supported by faculty leaders and carefully prepared schemes of work. However, in a few lessons a shortage of specialist staff due to absence and resignations, coupled in some instances with severe difficulty in recruiting satisfactory replacement teachers, is adversely affecting the quality of learning and pupils' achievement. The core subjects, dance and RE all suffer to some degree from this. Staff working closely with special needs pupils are well experienced and qualified for this work.

85 The expenditure on clerical and technical support is low compared to national averages. Practical subjects, particularly science have less technical support than they need. However, support staff are deployed effectively and provide a good and valued service.

86 There is a good mixture of long-serving teachers who have been in the school for fifteen years or more and new or recently qualified teachers. Nearly twenty teachers, including the headteacher and the heads of the English, science and modern foreign language faculties have joined the school in the last two years bringing much new energy and innovation to the school. This was a feature of staffing particularly praised by both parents and pupils. There is a well-planned and supportive induction programme for newly qualified teachers. The induction mentor has prepared a good programme of advice and guidance and is readily available to provide help. Support of similarly high quality is given by the new teachers' faculties. Frequent opportunities exist for new teachers to be observed, to observe experienced teachers teach, and to discuss what can be learnt. There is no formal induction process for

other new staff, although where appropriate this is linked to aspects of the newly qualified teacher (NQT) programme.

87 Although the school no longer adheres to conventional models of staff appraisal its procedures for monitoring staff and performance management are good and have resulted in confidence in the school eligibility for Investor in People status. Teachers are regularly observed in the classroom by heads of faculty or senior managers and are given agreed targets and the training required to achieve them. There are several examples of teachers negotiating new responsibilities as a result of management review and undertaking them with great success.

88 The arrangements for staff development are satisfactory and improving under the new management structure. In-service training needs are clearly identified at whole school and individual levels. Priorities for funding of courses are established and usefully relate to faculty development plans, which in turn cross reference to the school development plan. For example all faculties have access to information technology training. A professional development planning group with representation from all faculty and pastoral areas meets regularly. Expenditure on staff development is low compared to national averages due to budgetary constraints. Despite this, attempts have been made to ensure access to good development opportunities for most staff, with a focus on middle management training having been successful last year. The use of school staff to lead training sessions has been a successful strategy in this respect.

Accommodation

89 The quality of the accommodation is good overall. The school is beginning to feel the benefit of having moved onto one site and into a building which has had almost £4 million spent on upgrading and refurbishing it. This has not been without cost though. Staff and pupils experienced a year of severe disruption to their work as the building work took place. This adversely affected standards of attainment and aggravated the school's efforts to improve attendance levels. The disruption had not ended by the time of this inspection. For example half of the school's science laboratories were still out of commission causing major disruption to the organisation of teaching and learning in this subject.

90 Most faculties are now accommodated in suites of newly refurbished classrooms along with meeting and preparation areas for staff. This supports teaching and faculty planning very well. Good facilities for teaching drama and information technology have a positive impact on the standards achieved. Some rooms in design technology are too small for some of the group sizes and the poor level of tidiness and cleanliness in some of the workshop areas creates an unsatisfactory learning environment.

91 Storage space is inadequate in some classrooms and some corridors in the newer part of the building are too narrow. The school has overcome the severe congestion to some degree by introducing one-way systems and by carefully monitoring pupil movement at lesson changes. The dining facilities in the school are very good and valued by pupils and staff. There is a general shortage of social areas for pupils and the front of the school, including the main entrance area, becomes badly littered during the school day. This detracts from the overall impressive nature of the refurbished school building. The site manager is effective in ensuring the premises are maintained safely and securely.

Learning Resources

92 The school's expenditure on learning resources as a percentage of its total budget has been well above the national average for the past two years, although this has been inflated by the recent investment in computer equipment. Expenditure on subject text books has improved since the last inspection and many departments, including mathematics, English, history and geography have greatly improved book stocks and other learning materials. There is still a shortfall in some subject areas such as science and modern foreign languages where there are insufficient books for pupils to take to complete tasks at home. Subject areas are mainly adequately resourced for equipment and materials, though further specific investment is needed; for example to purchase data-logging equipment in science. Generally staff make good use of existing stock and relatively small budgets to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately resourced to match learning needs.

93 Facilities for information and communication technology are good in the specialist department. Recent investment following successful bidding for project funding and a franchise arrangement with Barnsley College has led to the development of two new information technology suites. These facilities are of a high standard and provide considerable enhancement to pupils' learning opportunities. The use of information technology in most faculty areas is less satisfactory. Some subjects such as modern languages, science and mathematics await the installation of new hardware and software. There are too few opportunities for pupils to use information technology as part their learning experience in most subject areas.

94 The learning centre, incorporating the school library has been improved using a £55,000 grant from the Dearne Valley Project. However, it is not yet providing an effective learning facility for pupils. The book stock is depleted though a programme of refurbishment has begun. The school allocated an extra £9,000 to spending on books last year and further investment is planned. A suite of computers located in the room is well used by pupils during lessons and lunchtimes. However, there is no full-time supervision of this area by a qualified person who can carry out key tasks such as organising books, periodicals and modern software so as to provide an effective research base. Inevitably pupils' fullest achievements are therefore constrained.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95 Dearne High School is providing a good quality of education and is very well managed. It is capable of raising standards in pupils' achievements as predicted. It needs greater support from the parents in its struggle to improve attendance levels. The following areas of concern coincide largely with the school's own identification of its main weaknesses and should form the basis for the governors' post-inspection action plan for further improvement:-

1. Improve the attendance of a significant minority of pupils by:-
 - working more intensively with parents and families where attendance records of children are poor
 - actively seeking greater support from the local education authority in tackling attendance problems; including increased support from the educational welfare service
 - exploring further opportunity for acquiring grants to support school initiatives for tackling problems with attendance
 - continuing to implement the range of strategies for monitoring and analysing attendance
 - continuing to seek effective strategies for promoting positive pupil attitudes to school attendance

Paragraphs 5, 16, 21, 61, 83, 100, 113, 124

2. Increase the proportion of pupils who gain higher grades in GCSE by:-
- implementing the strategies for raising attainment at Key Stage 4 which are detailed in the school management plan
 - continuing to implement the school's literacy strategy which still has some shortcomings
 - improving the school's provision for raising pupils' numeracy skills
 - improving the attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils, especially boys
 - improving standards of attainment in double science and French GCSE

Paragraphs 5, 6, 13, 14, 16, 44, 135, 191

3. Raise standards of achievement in science at both key stages by:-
- improving the teaching of scientific investigation
 - providing pupils with greater opportunity to take a firm role in organising and pursuing their own best ways of learning
 - improving the ability of some teachers to plan effective science lessons and to manage the behaviour of pupils
 - improving the availability and use of information technology in science teaching and learning
 - changing timetabling arrangements for science which adversely affect provision and are especially constraining for practical work
 - improving the availability of good quality text books at Key Stage 4
 - increasing the level of technical support for science
 - continuing to seek assistance from the local education authority in overcoming problems with recruiting good science teachers

Paragraphs 132, 136, 137, 141, 143, 144

4. Improve the quality of provision for information technology which does not comply with National Curriculum requirements by:-
- completing and extending the IT schemes of work to include all year groups as planned
 - increasing the level of opportunity for pupils to use information technology in other subject areas
 - upgrading the quality of hardware and software in subject areas to increase access for pupils
 - utilising the funds available through government grants to provide IT training for teachers

Paragraphs 184, 185, 187, 188

5. Improve the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages where it is unsatisfactory or poor by:-
- better matching the work provided to the ability of pupils
 - pacing lessons to better suit the pupils' rate of learning
 - improving the management of pupils' behaviour

Paragraphs 198-199

6. Increase the provision for pupils with special educational needs by:-
- creating a more effective process for the use of individual education plans including precise targets for pupils as planned
 - developing more effective links between the special needs co-ordinator and heads of faculty

Paragraphs 5, 34, 35, 72

7. Develop the learning centre so that it becomes a more effective study resource for pupils by:-
- improving the library facility within the centre to enhance provision for reading
 - employing a centre manager to organise the availability of learning resources during the school day

Paragraph 94

Other matters requiring attention:-

- i. The quality of supply teaching in mathematics is unsatisfactory. This leads to lack of pupil motivation and unsatisfactory progress.
- ii. The allocation of time to the study of art at Key Stage 3 is insufficient to allow all pupils to benefit fully from the detail of the National Curriculum programmes of study
- iii. The level of maintenance and general housekeeping in technology workshop areas presents a significant health and safety risk, and results in a working environment that is unlikely to promote high standards
- iv. Some aspects of PE teaching need to be improved to involve pupils more in activities that will encourage them to take greater responsibility for their learning and in developing questioning technique. Also the planning and organisation of the PE curriculum requires some attention
- v. The provision of a daily act of worship still needs a solution
- vi. The management of RE is unsatisfactory. Priority should be given to reviewing the scheme of work, both in relation to providing appropriate levels of challenge for the pupils and the requirements of the Barnsley Agreed Syllabus.
- vii. Further development of the school assessment policy are needed to help shape curriculum planning.
- viii. The level of litter at the front of the school building should be reduced.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	208
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	62

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	15	36	37	5	1	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1191
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	402
Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	59
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	376
English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

Attendance

Authorised absence

	per cent
School data	10.5
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	per cent
School data	2.1
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
	1999	123	113	236

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	40	56	25
	Girls	65	48	27
	Total	105	104	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45(45)	44(42)	22(29)
	National	63(65)	62(60)	55(56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	14(23)	19(18)	4(9)
	National	20(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45	54	42
	Girls	71	54	48
	Total	116	108	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	49(49)	46(N/A)	38(N/A)
	National	64(62)	64(64)	60(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	12(15)	26(N/A)	10(N/A)
	National	31(31)	37(37)	28(31)

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
	1999	133	123	256

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	17	105	118
	Girls	29	100	109
	Total	46	205	227
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	18(23)	80(83)	89(88)
	National	46.3(44.4)	90.7(89.6)	95.7(95)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	24(27.4)
	National	37.8(36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	per cent success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	103
	National	73

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	119.1
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	149	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y[] – Y[]

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	64.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y[] – Y[]

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	669

Deployment of teachers: Y[] – Y[]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.8
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Average teaching group size: Y[] – Y[]

Key Stage 3	24.3
Key Stage 4	21.7

Financial information

Financial year	98/99
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	£
Total income	2,858,602
Total expenditure	2,769,004
Expenditure per pupil	2,232
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,635
Balance carried forward to next year	114,233

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1191
Number of questionnaires returned	321

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	51	14	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	40	48	8	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	49	11	7	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	17	5	1
The teaching is good.	32	55	6	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	40	14	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	43	6	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	32	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	29	48	15	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	33	51	7	4	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	49	10	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	44	10	4	11

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

ENGLISH

Standards

96 Key Stage 3 attainment measured by percentages reaching level 5 and above in tests and teacher assessments is well below the national average, but broadly in line with that of similar schools. The trend is in line with the national improvement rate with the percentage of pupils achieving level 6 or above at a higher level than that of similar schools. Results in 1999 were below those of 1998, but in line with performance trends in other subjects.

97 GCSE English results are well below national averages, with boys performing significantly less well than girls. GCSE English literature results are below those for English and slightly below those of the same pupils in other subjects. GCSE drama results are below national averages and below those of the same pupils in other subjects in 1999, but these results run counter to the trend of previous years in which attainment was close to national averages. Prior attainment scores for the year group predicted poor outcomes for 1999 to a maximum of 18 per cent A*-C grades in the school as a whole. GCSE English results were 20.4 per cent A*-C.

98 Appropriately challenging targets for 2000 and estimated grades indicate significant improvement in both boys' and girls' attainment. Classroom observations confirm standards to be below national expectations in all three programmes of study, but showing particular improvement in the extent and quality of finished writing for formal coursework and examination. This work is close to national expectations. Lowest and highest attaining pupils are making good progress. Middle attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress. Boys make good progress in the experimental single sex grouping in Year 9, but there is little progress in widening attitudes and challenging stereotypical responses. Pupils, boys in particular, make less progress in spelling and the use of more complex sentences than grasping complete texts and in improving quality of writing by particular techniques of style. Almost all pupils are impressively able to explain the level at which they are working and many are able to identify key elements for further improvement, particularly in writing.

99 Particularly high standards were reached by a Year 9 lowest attaining group studying *Romeo and Juliet*. Pupils all responded with interest and enthusiasm to the issues around Capulet's party and generated a useful guide to making invitations. Pupils' folders showed good evidence of note-taking being developed into more extended writing. Wider reading comparative book reviews in a top set of Year 8 showed lively, humorous touches and good awareness of the purpose and audience for the chosen books. Pupils expressed enjoyment of their own choice of books and gave good reasons for their preferences. A middle set in Year 10 gave evidence of imaginative enrichment of description through devices of style.

Attitudes

100 Pupils are interested, keen to learn and positive in almost all lessons observed. Pupils respond well to challenging tasks requiring independent thinking and co-operation. A few pupils, often boys, lose concentration when teaching lacks a clear focus and learning objective or when passive learning predominates and pace is lost. Attitudes towards learning are fostered well by the whole faculty approach to achieving improvement, which involves pupils in explicit ways to agree effective ways forward. Such a collaborative approach fosters strong values of respect and listening. Pupils appreciate the consultation and many warmly praise the English teaching they receive. Significant numbers attend the reading club, extension and support clubs and drama clubs, although more girls than boys tend to

participate. Borrowing from the library is well below expectations, however, although pupils, particularly in the top sets, use the public library a great deal. Pupils are friendly

towards each other and adults. They show courtesy and concern for others. Working atmospheres are very good, with most pupils respecting others. Some lessons, however, suffer from late arrivals or high levels of absence. This problem is particularly marked in lower sets in Key Stage 4. Drama contributes very well to pupils' awareness and understanding of others' feelings, values and beliefs. The subject, together with many English lessons, encourages personal and group initiative, the willingness to take responsibility for self and others. The recent focus on listening has produced improved concentration, although some lessons give too little opportunity for pupils to create and present extended talk as a natural part of learning.

Teaching

101 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, often better and occasionally excellent. There is greater consistency in teaching within Key Stage 4, but some excellent teaching was observed in Key Stage 3.

102 Teachers show generally good subject knowledge, particularly of the texts studied. They present tasks and explanations clearly. They generally show interest in and enjoyment of the texts and the purposes of the lesson. Plans are well matched to the schemes of work and most show appropriate activities and general objectives. In the best lessons, the learning objectives for lessons are shared effectively with pupils and used to establish targets both for the class and individuals. Most tasks challenge pupils appropriately, but some teaching expects too little of the pupils and pace is occasionally lost in explanations that are too long rather than enabling the pupils to tease out the learning actively and independently. Most teachers give general praise to the pupils for their work and, in the best practice, praise is linked to specific attainments and used to foster ambition and self-confidence. Ends of lessons tend to be rushed and the systematic sharing of what has been learned tends to be cursory. Some 50 minute lessons, particularly with higher attaining pupils, lacked precise timing and a range of learning techniques to enable reflection and extended response.

103 Although there is excellent support for basic literacy through excellent faculty booklets, there is too little teaching about word meanings in the context where they actually occur. Likewise, there is too little explicit teaching of spelling and reading strategies to support independence, particularly for weaker pupils, often boys.

104 There is good evidence of teachers developing a wider range of methods to suit different learning styles and a willingness to investigate, adapt and apply aspects of the primary literacy framework. Staff development would be assisted by more use of guided reading, training for support assistants in reading recovery based practice and shared ways of using auditory, visual and kinaesthetic approaches to language development. Whole class questioning tends to lead to monosyllabic pupil answers mainly from a few pupils, often boys, in some lessons. There is too little use of targeted questions and development of more extended responses, although there is good practice in drama in the use of hotseating for character development.

105 Teachers are generally very good at managing pupils and there is, in almost all cases, a proper and respectful insistence on high standards of behaviour. Support assistants are normally linked to lowest attaining sets and have effective relationships with both teacher and pupils, although there are too few opportunities for the support assistant to be actively involved during whole class work in some instances.

106 The new system for collecting an archive of exemplar work together with a file of assessed writing for every pupil is supporting a consistent and effective assessment and target setting process, particularly for writing outcomes. Pupils appreciate the agreed marking system and comment favourably on the helpful comments linked to clear guidance for improvement. Although whole school homework patterns are difficult to track over time, work is set regularly. The homework language study book is contributing well to pupils' understanding and knowledge of grammar, although there is room for further application of this knowledge in shared and modelled reading and writing. Teachers use the technical language of literary stylistic devices confidently and well. There is less use of grammatical and word level terms and pupils are less confident in their use, particularly in lower sets of Key Stage 3.

107 Pupils work productively and at a good pace in the main. A few pupils with reading and writing difficulties struggle once independent work is required. Middle and lower attaining pupils are less confident but they are usefully supported by a range of sharply targeted methods for improving writing. Some pupils placed in lower and middle attaining sets need additional help in basic reading and writing. Systems for structuring independent work in the classroom to enable teachers to work closely with small groups at word and sentence level, guided reading and writing are yet to be developed. Almost all pupils know the level at which they are working in writing and can tell what they need to do to improve. A similar awareness in reading and speaking and listening is yet to be achieved.

108 Particularly effective teaching and learning were observed in an investigation of vocabulary linked to war in the context of *The Silver Sword* by Iain Serrallier when musical, visual and conceptual thinking were developed to grasp abstract nouns in human and spiritual ways. Powerful investigation of stereotypical "manly" characteristics was carried out through the analysis of a scene from *Macbeth* and a first look at Kipling's poem *IF*, although the impact on the all boys' group may initially have reinforced stereotypical views of women rather than challenged them. There was also good modelling of responses to quotations in context for pupils to use and an ambitious lesson based on individual and choral speaking of *Hiawatha*. A useful format for investigating poems in high attaining Key Stage 4 sets produced interesting discussion in small groups. There was little evidence of the use of drama techniques in exploring and creating texts in English lessons. A few pupils, all boys, explained that studying a Shakespeare play was English and not drama!

Management

109 The new schemes of work in Key Stage 3 provide a powerful and systematic coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. These ensure an entitlement for all pupils. There is a coherent planning system. Learning objectives from the primary and developing national Key Stage 3 literacy strategy would provide a useful backbone of progression to further support teacher planning. Although there is an induction to the library lesson available for Year 7, there is too little emphasis and support for independent reading for pleasure at present. There are appropriate plans to redress this concern. Drama is taught separately and effectively within expressive arts, but the use of drama to develop more confident, extended talk in many English contexts is too little in evidence. The faculty contributes well to PSE through literature study and strands of work for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are in place. There is a strong contribution to moral and social development and some support for cultural and spiritual development within the choice of texts and approaches to learning. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is appropriate, although lowest attaining pupils struggle to reach accreditation standards and might be better served by following the modular Certificate in Education in parallel with GCSE. The mentor scheme to enable form tutors to help individual pupils is having a good effect as is involvement of the head of faculty in paired teaching and observations. Parents are involved regularly when pupils receive praise or are in need of additional support. Teachers give of their time freely and helpfully within support and extension clubs, a reading club and drama clubs.

110 Resources for English have improved greatly recently, although effective and accessible storage remains a concern. There is a growing range of class readers and book boxes exist in some rooms. IT is used in Successmaker, regular Year 8 lessons, on two computers in one English room and through the learning centre. The faculty booklets contribute strongly to the ethos of improvement within the faculty. New rooms are light, pleasant and enlivened by excellent displays of children's work and guidance for learning. In the best lessons, these displays are used effectively to give models of best practice, reinforce understanding and introduce new ideas.

111 The leadership of the faculty is appropriate, clear, targeted, ambitious and based on a powerful model for development. The faculty has moved a long way in a short time to institute effective monitoring, evaluation, self-review and support. This process is leading to more consistent teaching and learning and agreed systems for pupils. It has new schemes of work and an increasingly useful assessment and target setting system. The development plan, consistent with the whole school management plan, is challenging but realistic. It is based on an effective evaluation of starting points and high expectations that standards will improve rapidly and in a sustainable way. The faculty has an increasingly shared ethos and pupils are very supportive of it. The imaginative involvement of pupils in evaluating the faculty's work and improvement provides a powerful model by which responsibility and mutual respect are being engendered. The faculty is supporting the growth of thinking skills in imaginative ways.

MATHEMATICS

Standards

112 Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 has improved over recent years. 50 per cent of the current intake achieved level 4 or better in their end of Key Stage 2 tests. This is still well below the national average. In the end of key stage 3 tests 45 per cent of pupils gained level 5 or better and 20 per cent gained level 6 or better. These results are well below the national averages but above the average for schools with similar intakes. Mathematics results at Key Stage 3 are higher than the results for the other core subjects of English and science within the school. Over the past three years Key Stage 3 results have improved at a slightly higher rate than the national average.

113 In the 1999 GCSE examinations 17 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-C grade compared with 46 per cent nationally. 89 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-G grade compared with 96 per cent nationally. Entry rates for GCSE mathematics are adversely affected by pupil absence. Relative to other subjects taken at GCSE mathematics results are slightly below average. The school also offers a GCSE in statistics as an optional subject. In 1999 59 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-C grade compared with 70 per cent nationally and 98 per cent of pupils achieved an A*-G grade compared with 97 per cent nationally. Statistics results are very good compared to other subjects taken at the school.

114 GCSE results in mathematics at A*-C have slightly fallen over the past 3 years by just over 4per cent. A*-G have also fallen by 11per cent as more pupils have been entered. The number of pupils gaining higher A*-B grades has increased over the last three years. Statistics results at A*-C have risen from 40 per cent to 60 per cent and at A*-G from 94 per cent to 98 per cent. The number of pupils entered for statistics GCSE has reduced significantly over the past three years as the subject became an option for Year 10 and 11 pupils.

115 Targets are set for GCSE grades A*-C and A*-G. Targets for 2000 indicate a significant intended improvement on results in 1999. Recently individual pupil targets have been developed for the end of Key Stage 3. These are supported by yearly tracking of pupil's progress.

116 The most able pupils in Year 9 exceed national expectations and can use Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometric ratios to solve problems and solve quadratic equations. Most pupils can use percentages, decimals and ratios, but only about half reach national expectations. The least able pupils can calculate simple areas and volumes using formulae and construct bar charts and pictograms. In Year 11 the most able pupils exceed national expectations and can use algebra to simplify algebraic fractions, solve quadratic equations and draw quadratic graphs using transformations. Most pupils can solve simultaneous equations, calculate the probability for two events and draw cumulative frequency graphs, but only about half reach national expectations. The least able pupils can calculate with percentages, construct triangles and calculate areas of circles. In all years lower attaining pupils lack confidence in basic arithmetic skills which restricts their progress in mathematics.

117 The most able pupils make good progress through challenging teaching and high expectations. In years 10 and 11 GCSE criteria are made explicit and advice is given on how to improve grades. Average ability pupils make satisfactory progress but could sometimes be further challenged with more demanding work. Less able pupils make slower progress due to their lack of confidence with basic skills.

118 Pupils have opportunities to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. In science and design technology they evaluate numerical formulae. In geography they construct and interpret graphs while art projects involve measuring and construction.

Teaching

119 The quality of teaching in mathematics and statistics is generally satisfactory or better. It is good or very good in three lessons seen at Key Stage 3 and six lessons at Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching in one lesson at each key stage was unsatisfactory. Both of these lessons were taught by supply teachers.

120 Lessons are well planned in line with the department's schemes of work. Each lesson has a clear, appropriate focus but learning objectives are not made explicit, shared with pupils and recapped at the end of lessons. In the most effective lessons expectations are high and pupils are made aware of what they need to do to improve their work and achieve higher levels and grades. In a Year 10 statistics lesson the higher level skills needed to be included in projects to achieve high grades were identified and recapped.

121 Explanations are very clear. Teachers manage pupils well. In almost all lessons there are high expectations of behaviour and attention to work with constant reminders and positive feedback. In the two unsatisfactory lessons full attention was not gained and some pupils did not participate appropriately, distracting others and learning little.

122 Lessons are generally well timed with a balance between teacher input and pupil activities. Conclusions to lessons are less effective, often involving only a brief teacher recap or comment on the next lesson rather than a recap and assessment of what has been learnt. Support assistants are generally well deployed, supporting special needs pupils and generally helping teachers in the classroom. Homework is generally effective. Work is regularly marked and progress and problems discussed with individual pupils but there are fewer examples indicating what pupils have achieved and how they can improve their work.

Attitudes

123 Most pupils enjoy mathematics and work hard in lessons. A minority of pupils in lower mathematics sets are less interested and easily lose concentration. Most pupils are keen to talk about their work and willing to try to answer questions even when they are not sure. Some pupils, particularly less able and older pupils are more reluctant to answer questions and lack the necessary mathematical vocabulary to participate fully in lessons. When given opportunities they collaborate well on games and activities and help each other on more difficult questions. Few pupils work in mixed gender groups.

124 Most pupils behave well in lessons and relate well to other pupils and adults. A small number of pupils behave poorly in lessons. They fail to listen to their teachers, chatter with friends and avoid doing any work. In many classes there are high levels of continued or intermittent absences, clearly lowering on possible levels of achievement.

Management

125 The mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Lessons follow the department's schemes of work. These schemes are being revised to take into account new textbooks and the new national framework for teaching mathematics at Year 7. Alternative accreditation for the least able pupils at Key Stage 4 is being explored and will lead to a revised scheme of work.

126 There are too few opportunities for pupils to tackle longer problems in mathematics. Most lessons involve a series of short questions and in some cases answers only are recorded, providing a very limited record of work. There are some opportunities for work on extended projects particularly for GCSE coursework in Years 10 and 11.

127 The department is developing strategies to improve numeracy skills particularly for lower attaining pupils. Targeted work using the computer program Successmaker is provided in lessons for the lowest attainers in Year 7,8 and 9. There is currently very little use of IT within mathematics lessons due to changes linked to the school's move to one site. A successful numeracy summer school for pupils moving from primary to secondary school was held during summer 1999 and is to be repeated this year. The school has strong, effective links with its feeder primary schools.

128 The department has begun to develop literacy skills in mathematics in line with the school's priority. Posters in rooms show key vocabulary but vocabulary is not regularly identified, recorded and practised in lessons. Pupils have too few opportunities to talk mathematically. Questions often require only short answers and pupils are rarely expected to provide clear explanations or read questions or texts aloud. In a good Year 11 lesson the focus was on reading and understanding questions. Vocabulary and definitions were explored and then applied to examination questions.

129 The department is well led and managed and works effectively together as a team. There is a clear commitment to raising attainment. The department has a three year development plan, which addresses the school priorities and sets out appropriate developments for the mathematics department. Teachers work co-operatively sharing ideas and good practice. A programme of monitoring and evaluation has recently been introduced as part of the whole school programme. It is intended to further extend, develop and formalise this process. Further professional development is now needed to ensure the effective implementation of developments.

130 Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge. The department has a significant number of non-specialist teachers whose knowledge, understanding and confidence restrict them to teaching younger or lower ability sets. Currently there are also a number of supply teachers covering absence, most of whom are also non-specialists. This clearly limits the department's capacity to raise standards.

131 Rooms and corridors have high quality displays of pupils' work, information posters and examples of work and descriptions illustrating the different levels of mathematical attainment. This creates a high quality learning environment. Resource allocation has been increased over recent years enabling the department to buy new textbooks and extend other book and practical resources so that these are now sufficient for all pupils.

SCIENCE

Standards

132 Standards of achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 were well below the national average in 1999. They were also low by comparison with similar schools whereas for the previous three years they had been comparable.

133 There is considerable evidence that the 1999 results were adversely affected by major disruption to science teaching during 1998/9. This has been due to management of the move onto one site and the continuing refurbishment of science accommodation which has at times necessitated up to 40 per cent of science lessons being out of laboratories. This has put a considerable strain on science staff. The department has also had to cope with a combination of long term staff absence and an acute shortage of suitable supply teachers. This has also lowered the quality of provision in this subject.

134 Standards reached by pupils now near the end of Key Stage 3, although still below national expectations overall, are at least in line with those of similar schools and show evidence of satisfactory progress. High ability pupils could distinguish between respiration and breathing and could use terms such as oxidation and photosynthesis appropriately. Middle ability pupils could predict how particle size might affect reaction rate and could competently and safely follow instructions when investigating this.

135 GCSE results for 1999 showed a similar decline to the Key Stage 3 test results, being well below national averages and low even compared to similar schools. This was untypical of the previous three years and was undoubtedly linked to the disruption mentioned above. The results of the 'mock GCSE science exams for the current Year 11 indicated a likely return to previous levels of attainment and even a small improvement in it.

136 Standards reached by pupils currently in Key Stage 4, whilst still below national expectations are in line with similar schools and show evidence of satisfactory progress. High ability pupils were well informed about atmospheric pollution and could explain the contributory factors such as burning fossil fuels. Others could explain osmosis in terms of particles and predict which way solvent would diffuse. Middle ability pupils could describe breathing movements and use their knowledge of pressure to explain how the lungs fill with air when the diaphragm contracts.

Teaching

137 The overall quality of teaching in both key stages is good with no significant difference between key stages or attainment targets of the National Curriculum. Lessons seen ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers generally pay great attention to linking the new lesson firmly with previous ones and to maintaining a good pace with high expectations of pupils' behaviour, effort and attainment. Lessons are well planned starting from the departmental schemes of work and are generally well organised. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for and interest in science. However, not enough attention is given to making the skills of scientific investigation explicit and to developing them during practical lessons. The use of IT is also insufficient either to exploit its potential for helping pupils to learn or for reflecting the important part it plays in modern science. Where teaching is less than satisfactory this is related to poor planning, low expectations of pupils and failure to challenge unacceptable behaviour effectively.

Management

138 The science curriculum complies fully with the statutory requirements in both key stages. However, difficulties associated with the move to 50 and 45 minute lessons put severe pressure on the planned time allocation for science. The Key Stage 3 course has just been re-organised and now has the scope to give pupils of all abilities an exciting and appropriate course. Single award modular science has been introduced at Key stage 4 to allow some pupils time to do GNVQ some of which are science related. The majority of pupils follow a modular double award GCSE course for which new schemes have just been completed. The new Certificate of Achievement course for low ability pupils in Key Stage 4 is providing interesting and appropriate challenges for pupils, who are responding well to it.

139 Pupils' progress is monitored systematically in a variety of ways, including end of topic or module test and regular marking of pupils' work. This information, together with that on pupils' prior attainment, is used to set and review targets with each pupil and to ensure that they are working to capacity. Systems also exist to involve parents when attainment falls below expectations as well as to make them aware of exceptional achievement.

140 Pupils with special educational needs are supported by non-teaching assistants who work well with the teacher concerned. They are generally making satisfactory progress.

141 Pupils generally respond well in science lessons showing good behaviour and keen interest. They are willing to make contributions in class and treat the equipment and fabric of the department with respect. They are, however, somewhat lacking in confidence and should be given more opportunity to develop this through being given greater responsibility to manage their own learning.

142 The department has an enthusiastic head and second in department and is well organised with generally full documentation in place. It has good procedures for reviewing teaching and monitoring provision and is working as a team to raise standards through initiatives such as mentoring borderline pupils. It has regular departmental meetings which are minuted with action points identified. Systems exist for ensuring standardisation of scientific investigation marking by teachers at Key Stage 4 and these should be extended to cover Key Stage 3

143 The move to 50 and 45 minute lessons has not been a good one for the department. Where lessons follow each other or morning assemblies, valuable minutes are regularly lost. In addition the increased number of lesson changes puts further pressure on already over stretched technical support.

Although staff have adapted their planning to cope with this it cuts the time for practical science within a lesson to unacceptable levels.

144 The level of resourcing of the department has increased considerably and some one-off funding has been used for new text books. However, the legacy of under-funding still remains with major pieces of equipment being old and in need of replacement. The under representation of information technology in the science curriculum is in part due to lack of data-loggers and computers. Although there are class sets of new textbooks for Key Stage 3, some of the Key Stage 4 textbooks are over ten years old and no Key Stage 4 pupil has a text to take home. With the completion of the refurbishment of the remaining laboratories the department will have excellent accommodation but it has totally inadequate technical support to enable full use to be made of this.

145 Since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements in resourcing and accommodation and the course provision has been reviewed and broadened. There is a greater emphasis on raising attainment and a variety of strategies are in place which have not yet had time to bear fruit.

ART

Standards

146 The department's transition from GCSE Art to the GNVQ Intermediate art and design course over recent years has proved successful in meeting the needs of the pupils in Key Stage 4 and in raising their standards of attainment. In 1998 and 1999 80 per cent of pupils achieved passes or higher grades in GNVQ, which is well above the 1999 national average of 62.5 per cent. This represents a very significant rise from the 25 per cent equivalent GCSE grades A*-C achieved at the time of the previous inspection in 1996.

147 At Key Stage 3 teacher assessments for 1999 indicate 75 per cent of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age and 25 per cent working towards the expected standard. More girls achieve the standard than boys. In the lessons seen at this stage pupils' attainment was satisfactory overall with no significant gender difference. Pupils in Year 7 are seen to be developing a good control of drawing materials and the use of colour but the scheme of work for Years 8 and 9 does not effectively build on these skills. By the end of Year 9 most pupils' work is neat and well organised with frequent references to artists' work but they are less confident in manipulating materials. A Year 8 project looking at masks from around the world results in a display of creatively decorated plaster casts from pupils' faces.

148 The amount and quality of work produced in sketchbooks and work folders are greatly increased by Year 11 due largely to the increase in time available and the greater commitment of the pupil groups. Some folders of explorations into fabrics and textile designs are very good with a good imagination and innovation shown in the colouring and decorating of fabrics and threads to create small but interesting sample pieces.

Teaching

149 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. Due to effective teaching pupils at Key Stage 3 enjoy art; most are enthusiastic and well motivated. Even when enthusiasm is modest, behaviour is usually good. In a Year 7 class pupils with special educational needs were enabled to achieve good standards for their ability through the teacher's well-judged modification of language and delivery. Weaker features of teaching at Key stage 3 include lessons with little structure and flat pace which do not set sufficient challenge for the pupils with higher ability. At Key stage 4 teaching is usually good. Supportive teaching focused on individuals' needs, interspersed with effective whole-class teaching. The teacher has a very good knowledge of GNVQ requirements. Pupils in the GNVQ art and design group receive very good individual feedback on their

project work with clear judgements referring to marking criteria that enable them to make good progress towards improving their grades.

150 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall in both key stages. They work well together on set tasks and in informal situations. They are proud of their work and value the letters of commendation received for good effort. In some longer, double lessons pupils' concentration lapses without any action being taken by the teacher to steer them back to the task, and their work rate slows considerably. Isolated incidences of disruptive behaviour are well managed by the teachers, enabling the rest of the class to continue working.

Management

151 The provision of time for teaching art in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. The percentage of the weekly timetable allocated to art at this key stage is, at 3.3 per cent, well below the national average of 4.2 per cent. Timetable overlaps with modern foreign languages result in many pupils missing art lessons and the rotation with others areas of design and technology makes continuity very difficult. There is a strong emphasis on the design process which, considering the limited time in Key Stage 3, leaves insufficient time to develop drawing skills and to explore the expressive qualities of the visual language that are at the heart of the National Curriculum for art and design. The provision for art in Key Stage 4, however, is good with a consistent 20 per cent of the timetable and an increasing involvement with outside agencies such as the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Barnsley Design Centre. This contributes to the cultural development of the pupils. Their social development is also well catered for through the fostering of good relationships within the school and, to a lesser extent, in their involvement with community arts projects. Projects are well structured and well matched to pupils' abilities enabling them to make very good progress over the two year GNVQ course.

152 The department has a very good combination of experienced and new staff. Procedures for assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' work are well established but the expected standard of work, particularly for Key Stage 3, is not sufficiently explicit and consideration should be given to creating a folio of graded work for reference. Opportunities for in-service training are taken though there is a particular need for training in the use of computers in art. Accommodation for the subject is good in the two art rooms, which are large and well lit with adequate storage and display space. One art teacher, however, has to work in an assortment of non-specialist rooms that limits the range of materials and techniques that can be taught.

153 The department has made good progress overall since the previous inspection with very good progress being made in pupils' attainment at Key Stage 4. Good progress has been made in introducing three-dimensional work though opportunities for drawing and painting for direct observation remain under developed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Standards

Key Stage 3

154 At the end of Key Stage 3 standards are below the average achieved by pupils nationally. When designing, pupils are able to communicate their ideas effectively through sketching and drawing. They use equipment competently and accurately, and display a wide range of graphic techniques. A particular strength is the use of colour in their design work. A year 9 group showed these skills and knowledge when challenged to design and illustrate their solutions for futuristic spectacles.

155 From Year 7 onwards, pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of materials and many are able to use technical vocabulary appropriately. In a Year 7 lesson on structures pupils were able to explain the principles of triangulation as they applied to the test pieces they had made. They were able to use simple tools and materials to make structures, which they then tested for strength. They showed a good understanding of the relationship between the weight of the structures and the loads they supported, and effectively applied numeracy skills to compare the results.

156 The pupils are developing a sound basic knowledge of processes and practical skills. Year 7 pupils in a food technology lesson demonstrated a good grasp of the knowledge and skills involved in measuring and weighing accurately in response to questions from their teacher. A Year 9 textiles group were able to describe the different options available for temporarily fastening a cushion cover together, including those pupils with special educational needs.

157 In resistant materials work the pupils are confident and competent in the use of hand and simple machine tools. The accuracy and quality of finish they achieve could be improved by an increased emphasis on these aspects through the teaching.

158 Throughout Key Stage 3 the pupils are taught in sets formed by ability. The curriculum is taught through a rotational course, with the pupils moving from one strand of design and technology to another. This arrangement offers opportunities for the work to be targeted for the different ability groups. These opportunities need to be further exploited to raise achievement of all pupils, but particularly the more able.

Key Stage 4

159 Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are well below the average achieved by pupils nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations was much lower than the national average. Compared with their results in other GCSE subject examinations, the majority of pupils achieved similar grades, and sometimes better, in design and technology.

160 Pupils taking the GCSE graphic products course achieve sound standards in designing, using sketching and presentation skills effectively. A Year 11 group were designing marketing materials for new products, combining imaginative design solutions with careful and accurate construction methods. Their use of IT as an integral part of their work is a particular strength. Pupils are developing their research and analysis skills and this was demonstrated by Year 10 pupils who had investigated the packaging used by fast food outlets and then applied this knowledge to help them create their own ideas for packaging.

161 In the Resistant Materials GCSE course pupils are able to carry out basic research and use tools and equipment confidently to construct their projects. Year 11 pupils were gathering and organising materials in their design folders to support their work on the theme of storage. The quality of this work could be improved if the pupils were more selective in their use of materials from catalogues and brochures, and concentrated more on the analysis of existing products rather than merely describing them.

Teaching

162 The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. In Key Stage 3 the majority of the teaching is good and occasionally it is very good. The pupils respond well to the lessons, which are well planned with clear objectives for learning, and the teachers have appropriately high expectations of the pupils in terms of progress and behaviour. Time is used well to create lessons that maintain the pupils' interest and attention. The use of IT is very well developed within the Key Stage 4 graphic products work, but is seriously underused by the department as a whole. In some Key Stage 4 resistant materials classes, particularly those with a large proportion of boys, there is a need to provide more structure to lessons to avoid pupils 'drifting' through a lack of purpose and challenge.

Management

163 The department is well led, and has recently introduced systems to monitor and evaluate its own work. Those systems now need to be extended to further develop the effectiveness of the teaching and raise the standards attained by the pupils

164 Since the last inspection the level of funding for design and technology has been improved and is now just below the national average. The accommodation for design and technology has been refurbished. The level of maintenance and general housekeeping in some of the workshop areas is poor. This presents a significant health and safety risk, and results in a working environment that is unlikely to promote high standards. The food technology room is small for the size of some of the classes.

GEOGRAPHY

Standards

165 Examination results in 1999 were below the national average for grades A*-C. Nevertheless, one pupil obtained grade A* and four others grade A. Grade A*-G results were close to the national average. The geography department predicts 40 per cent A*-C grades for 2000. Over the last four years since the previous inspection the percentage of A*-C grades has been improving, reflecting the effective measures taken to raise standards in both key stages, and to prepare pupils for the requirements of GCSE examinations. The evidence of inspection shows pupils in both keys stages having at the least a satisfactory knowledge of the subject, and their developing effective skills with which to analyse and use geographical sources. By the end of Year 10 most understand how to communicate their ideas in a structured manner and the need to make maximum use of work covered such as in the case studies. More able pupils show a high level of understanding both in class discussions and written work. Average and less able pupils show improving standards of attainment. However in Year 11 the increased level of absenteeism experienced by the school generally is preventing a minority of pupils from achieving their potential. The department has worked very hard to improve and refine its assessment procedures and there is regular analysis of assessment data. This is well used to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve attainment and also to set targets for pupils with estimated borderline grades.

166 At Key Stage 3 inspection of pupils' work and of assessment data shows that the majority of pupils are achieving standards in line with national expectations. By the end of this key stage the majority of pupils of all abilities are acquiring and can apply a wide range of geographical skills and knowledge. This includes developing an extended geographical vocabulary, asking and answering geographical questions, undertaking fieldwork, map work at a variety of scales, effective use of globes and atlases, and use of photographs, satellite images and IT to obtain additional information. Different

countries such as Spain, Italy and Kenya are studied, together with thematic studies such as tectonic processes, weather and climate, ecosystems, population and settlement, and investigation of

environmental issues. The attention given to basic skills such as numeracy and graphicacy is a pleasing feature of the work of the department. Year 7 pupils investigate environmental issues such as the problems caused for the countryside by human activities, making careful use of geographical terms, and learning about the complexity of the issues being studied. Year 8 pupils are studying the impact and effects of tourism in Spain, using photographs and other data to determine the extent of change on traditional ways of life.

167 Year 8 pupils visit the Yorkshire coast for fieldwork studies as part of the topic 'People and Coasts'. In one Year 9 class pupils used textbooks, photographs, statistics, maps and key words when making comparisons of northern and southern Italy as part of a case study of a European Union country. In another Year 9 class pupils explored the reasons for differences and the complexity of their effects in economic and social terms. There was lively and spontaneous debate, led by girls, of the possibility of economic exploitation of southern farmers by more developed E.U. countries, and of possible ways of remedying this. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils have frequent opportunities to carry out their own investigations, identifying questions, collecting evidence and data, and presenting their findings orally, in writing, as statistics (graphs, tables), in map form and as reports and newspaper articles and commentaries. The setting system employed in Years 8 and 9 enables abler pupils to make very good progress and achieve high standards of oral and written work.

168 In all lessons in both key stages pupils' attitude to the subject is very good and demonstrated by the high numbers opting for it in Key Stage 4. Pupils are well behaved and well motivated, responding to the good teaching and the interest raised. On the one occasion when some pupils tried to misbehave the teacher's attitude, management strategies and good organisation of learning opportunities solved the difficulty in a positive manner. Pupils enjoy the subject, listen carefully and concentrate. In lessons usually at least half, both boys and girls, are willing to join in discussions and answer questions. Teachers ensure that quieter pupils are included and involved. The majority of pupils of all abilities take responsibility for organising themselves, responding to the opportunities for independent learning. Less able pupils are well supported in this by the classroom support assistants. Pupils co-operate well even without being asked and respect each other's ideas and opinions. The attention given in the scheme of work to identifying opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual and moral development is making a very useful contribution to personal development. For example in Year 10 pupils considered migration from urban to rural areas and what is meant by the quality of life, different values and positive and negative features; and in Year 11 pupils investigated the impact on traditional ways of life and the natural environment of change and development brought about by tourism in Kenya.

Teaching

169 All pupils are equally challenged by their teachers who have high expectations of their behaviour and capacity to succeed. An example of this is that for four years pupils have taken part in national competitions organised by the Geographical Association, and have twice won local rounds and gone on to regional ones. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of very good support by classroom support assistants who work closely with teachers. Pupils with special needs, but without statements, are set targets by the department using information provided by the special needs co-ordinator. Good use is made of differentiated resources and activities in mixed ability sets. However less able pupils do need to be given more opportunity to extend their writing rather than being restricted to using worksheets with a narrow range of types of writing. There is a good balance of writing and worksheets for average pupils, and abler pupils have opportunities for different kinds of writing, including extended writing which is often of a very high standard.

170 Progress is extensively monitored by formal and informal assessment, including marking of class and homework, coursework, tests and examinations. Examples of different levels of pupil work are displayed and used by pupils to identify targets for personal improvement. Targets are also set for pupils. By the end of Key Stage 3 there is comprehensive data by which pupils' standards at Key Stage 4 in GCSE can be predicted.

171 The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and good and very good in Key Stage 4. Teachers possess a very good knowledge of the subject, of the requirements of the National Curriculum and of the GCSE syllabus. This is reflected both in the standard of planning with its identification of key learning objectives to focus lessons, and in the careful preparation of resources and activities appropriate for the age and ability of pupils. Teachers are helped when planning lessons by the excellent, detailed and comprehensive scheme of work. Planning includes making very good use of time, and the pace of lessons is a significant factor in sustaining pupils' concentration, attention and interest. Questions are designed to encourage pupils to think for themselves and to include as many pupils as possible in discussion. Lessons are well managed and behaviour is always very good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and contribute to pupils' interest and learning. There is consistent use of whole class sessions to enable pupils to share good ideas and to review learning in lessons. Work is carefully marked and there is good feedback orally in lessons. Homework which extends learning is set regularly and recorded. There is a good level of on-the-spot assessment during lessons by listening to pupils, asking them questions, observing their work patterns and their attitudes. A significantly good feature of teaching is the use of assessment data to inform pupils of their progress and to indicate what needs doing to improve. This is matched by careful preparation of Key Stage 3 pupils for GCSE which is reflected in the high numbers opting for geography at Key Stage 4, and by the skilful teaching of examination technique in Years 10 and 11.

Management

172 The head of department (who is also head of the humanities faculty) provides excellent leadership. He has a clear vision for the development of the subject and is giving a clear lead and sense of purpose to the department. His own knowledge and experience are first rate. Since the last inspection new policies and a new scheme of work have been written and a new GCSE syllabus has been inaugurated. All the issues raised by the last inspection have been addressed. In particular the strong emphasis on the collection and analysis of assessment data is making a significant contribution to raising standards. The progress made by pupils is demonstrated by the many examples of their work (with teacher comments and marks and indications of National Curriculum levels) to be seen in geography classrooms and on the corridor. These are used to help pupils understand what constitutes achievement and progress in National Curriculum terms and how these relate to GCSE grades, and what they need to do to improve. The department has received priority funding in 1998-9 which has resulted in purchase of a variety of needed resources appropriate for different ability levels. These are currently at least adequate and it is intended to continue to add to them. Teachers have made a start on monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. IT and audio-visual resources are well used and the department is ready to exploit the new networking IT system as soon as it is ready. Reports to parents include helpful information on pupils' strengths and weaknesses, levels of attainment, learning experiences and development of skills. Accommodation is adequate and can be used flexibly.

173 There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. All of the issues have been addressed. The geography department is making a good contribution to achievement of the school's aims and objectives.

HISTORY

Standards

174 Examination results in history in 1999 were below the national average for grades A*-C. Grade A*-G results were also below the national average. This year (2000) three groups, totalling approximately 76 pupils will be entered for GCSE. The school predicts overall A*-C grades as being 30 per cent. Over the last four years the percentage of A*-C grades in history has been improving, reflecting measures taken to raise standards in both key stages. There is an emphasis on informing Key Stage 3 pupils about what will be expected of them if they opt for history in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding, and this is cross-referenced to National Curriculum levels. Year 10 and 11 pupils are systematically taught examination techniques. Able pupils have a good knowledge of the periods studied in Key Stage 3, are developing the skills and understanding with which to investigate and analyse historical sources and are able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively. Average pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of topics and are developing skills and understanding. Less able pupils have full access to the subject but need to have more opportunities to extend their writing beyond what is required currently by the learning strategies used. However, orally they are challenged appropriately and teachers' expectations are high. In Year 11 the increased level of absenteeism experienced by the school generally is hindering a minority of pupils from achieving their potential at GCSE. The department has worked hard to improve its assessment procedures throughout the two key stages and there is considerable regular analysis of the data acquired. This is being used effectively to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve attainment and make progress, and also to set targets for pupils judged to have borderline grades.

175 At Key Stage 3 inspection of lessons and work shows that the majority of pupils are achieving standards in line with national expectations. The foundations for improving standards in GCSE are being put into place. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are acquiring, and can use, a range of skills and knowledge. Year 7 pupils can use artefacts to explore how native Americans and Europeans had to work through the experience of encountering new ideas, materials and activities as a result of cross-cultural contact in the 17th century, and how these may have affected feelings and attitudes. Other Year 7 pupils were able to explain how their prior perceptions of native Americans had changed as a result of their studies, and gave reasons for this, referring to historical sources. They clearly understood the meaning of stereotypes and bias. Year 8 pupils have used a variety of sources – written, pictorial and audio-visual - to investigate the causes of the French Revolution. As part of this they learned how to interrogate in depth a picture. Able pupils were keen to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of eye-witness accounts of historical events. Year 9 pupils were observed investigating why the League of Nations failed as a result of challenges by countries such as Japan and because of the attitudes of the Great Powers. Pupils worked in pairs, some boys with girls. An archival film on video was used by the teacher to illustrate the topic. Other Year 9 pupils worked well to produce posters showing League activities.

176 In Year 10 pupils successfully used several textbooks and other sources as part of an enquiry into Nazi treatment of German Jews, and used the information to prepare a prosecution case as could have been used at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal. They were able to take a selection of sources, including a textbook, for homework. Year 11 pupils showed good understanding of the Cold War and Arms Race, making notes independently. In another class pupils practised examination techniques for questions on the failure of the Schlieffen Plan in 1914. A third Year 11 class showed a sophisticated appreciation of Cold War attitudes and bias, including use of rhetoric by political leaders, and were developing understanding of economic and technological factors involved in détente and change inside the Soviet Union.

178 There is clear evidence from scrutiny of pupils' written work of appropriately linked coverage and deepening complexity in skills, understanding and knowledge. Pupils' progress is encouraged by the high expectations of their teachers. The use of setting by the Humanities Faculty also contributes by making it possible for the abler to be challenged appropriately whilst the less able and pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their teachers and classroom support assistants. Pupils' progress is extensively monitored by informal and formal assessments of work, coursework, tests and examinations. The results of selected items are displayed so that pupils can identify targets for personal improvement. By the end of Key Stage 3 there is sufficient data now for pupils' standards at GCSE to be predictable.

Teaching

179 No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. At Key Stage 3 teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent, and at Key Stage 4 it was judged to be good and very good. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge, and their own enthusiasm and interest is communicated to pupils. This is evidenced by the increasing numbers of Year 9 pupils opting to study the subject at GCSE level. The three non-specialist teachers are well supported by the subject specialists with regular inservice training, advice and access to examples of good learning. The standard of planning is good and lessons are well prepared with careful attention given to selection of resources, teaching and learning strategies and use of time. Some very creative and imaginative teaching strategies were observed on a number of occasions. The pace of work in lessons is a significant factor in maintaining pupils' interest and concentration. Questions are used to encourage pupils to think for themselves and to involve as many as possible in discussions. Lessons are well managed and behaviour is always very good. Relationships with pupils are positive and friendly. There are opportunities to share interesting ideas and full class sessions at the end of lessons are well used to review progress and understanding. Work is marked regularly and there is good oral feedback when work is returned. Homework is used to extend learning and encourage research. There is good informal assessment during lessons through observation of pupils and asking them questions. Key Stage 3 pupils are being carefully prepared for GCSE work and this is matched by skilful preparation of pupils for public examinations during Year 11.

180 In the lessons inspected in both key stages pupils' attitudes were very good. This is evidenced by the numbers opting for history at GCSE, which have grown steadily. Pupils are usually well behaved and motivated, responding to the good standard of teaching and the interest raised in lessons. Where there has been any misbehaviour this has been dealt with effectively and promptly. Pupils enjoy history, are attentive and keep on task. Both boys and girls respond well and are willing to answer questions and to participate in discussions. They are able to organise their own work and concentrate on it. Less able pupils are well supported by the classroom support assistants who work closely with class teachers. The subject is making a useful contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, based on the identification of learning opportunities identified in the scheme of work for the subject. For example Year 7 pupils have explored a range of feelings associated with encountering new situations and experiences as part of their study of the native peoples of the Americas, and have been helped to challenge and test the validity of stereotypical images of people of different cultures.

Management

181 The head of the history department (who is second in charge of the humanities faculty) provides very effective leadership. Her management of the department is excellent. She gives a clear lead and provides a sense of purpose for the team of teachers. She is particularly helpful and supportive to the non-specialists teaching history in Key Stage 3. Her subject knowledge and teaching skills are first rate. Policies and a scheme of work are in place. Issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed regularly and systematically and examples of pupils' work can be seen in classrooms to promote pupils' interest and help them to improve. Teaching and learning is now being monitored. Money has been spent well to build up the stock of textbooks and other resources. Audio-visual resources are very well used. IT remains to be developed and will be as soon as the school's new IT system permits access. Reporting to parents provides information on skills and knowledge, levels of attainment, experiences, preferred ways of working, and strengths and weaknesses.

182 There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. All of the issues have been addressed. The history department is making a good contribution to achievement of the school's aims and objectives.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Standards

183 Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the average achieved by pupils nationally. Some pupils have a very basic level of knowledge and skill, being unable to carry out procedures such as accessing programmes and saving work. The majority are making sound progress within the new scheme of work. Year 7 and 8 pupils were observed learning the basic use of a spreadsheet to successfully make a school timetable for themselves, and were able to input text, change the size of the cells and print the finished product.

184 Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also below the average achieved by pupils nationally. In a Year 10 IT lesson pupils were using desk-top publishing software to create a leaflet to advertise an event. A small number of pupils were unable to load the software or save their work. The majority of pupils have had insufficient previous teaching and experience of IT to enable them to achieve the standards expected at this stage. Standards are higher in the GNVQ IT course where some individual pupils have produced some very well presented books to support reading in local primary schools.

185 Overall, IT is not well integrated across all subjects of the curriculum, although good work was seen in some areas. In music, pupils used composition software for recording and playback, and in English Year 8 pupils word processed their book reviews. In the GCSE graphic products course, Year 11 pupils designed on screen and used a computer driven machine for cutting card for modelling their design solutions in three-dimensions, and for cutting graphic designs out of vinyl. In art, Year 11 pupils successfully combined background, text and clip art for poster designs and scanned, stretched and manipulated images as part of a project to design a set of postage stamps.

Teaching

186 The quality of teaching is satisfactory and in Key Stage 3 the majority of the teaching is good or very good. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject themselves and lessons are well planned and prepared. The tasks are appropriate for the pupils, given the low level of basic skills they currently have. Clear learning objectives are set for each lesson and pupils given useful time related deadlines for the completion of work. The new family learning centre is spacious, but full classes of pupils still have to share computers. The teachers successfully organise and manage these resources, and the pupils respond well by sharing machines and taking turns sensibly. They enjoy using IT and work at a good pace, acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding. The majority of the pupils are very well behaved, and sustain interest and concentration throughout the lessons, including those with special educational needs.

Management

187 The IT co-ordinator has been in post less than a term and is providing good leadership within the subject. The scheme of work for information technology (IT) is still in the course of being written and has been in place for less than a term. At this stage, the school acknowledges that it is not currently fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school provides a lesson a week for pupils in Year 7, 8 and 10 and a GNVQ course is taken by some pupils in Years 10 and 11. Prior to this the school did not provide an IT course other than those leading to a qualification in Key Stage 4. The pupils' previous experience of IT was dependent on the work undertaken in the different subjects of the curriculum. The school has recently made a significant investment in the accommodation, hardware and software to provide four excellent areas for IT.

188 To raise standards in IT the scheme of work needs to be completed and extended to include all year groups, and more opportunities need to be provided for pupils to use IT across all subject areas. To enable this to happen the school needs to implement its plans to improve the quality and quantity of hardware and software in curriculum areas and to exploit the potential of the New Opportunities Fund to provide IT training for teachers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Standards

189 All pupils in the school study French. The school has traditionally taught Russian as a second foreign language, but the present Year 11 pupils are the last year group to study the language. Higher attaining pupils now begin German in Year 8 with the option of continuing with the language in Key Stage 4.

190 According to teachers' assessments, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in French in 1999 was well below average. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection. Because of school examinations it was only possible to observe one Year 9 lesson during the inspection. Evidence from teachers' records and from the work in pupils' exercise books shows that, although standards remain below average, they have improved. Higher and some average attaining pupils can use the past tense accurately in speaking and writing and can understand passages of French relating to events in the past. Almost all pupils can join in conversations in French and can write short passages, for example giving details about themselves, well enough to be readily understood. This represents a good level of achievement given pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Attainment in German for those pupils who study it is in line with national averages. Pupils have reached a similar level in each of the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

191 At Key Stage 4 in 1999, only a very small proportion of pupils was entered for the GCSE examination in French. The percentage of these pupils gaining A* to C grades was low in comparison with national averages. The remaining pupils in the year group gained no qualifications in French. In the last three years, results have varied from year to year, as have the numbers of pupils entered for the examination, but these have been small as a percentage of the year group in comparison with most schools, and results have been well below average. Pupils' grades in French have been significantly lower than those in their other subjects

192 Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' work in Key Stage 4 during the inspection show a very significant improvement on past years. The vast majority of the year group is entered for the GCSE examination. Pupils are following a course in which their final GCSE grade is based on assessments at regular points during the two years. Teachers' estimates of the grades they are likely to achieve, based on the marks they have gained to date, show that, although still below the national average, a much higher percentage of pupils is expected to gain A* to C grades. Those who are not following GCSE courses are working towards a nationally recognised Certificate of Achievement in French.

193 Lower and average attaining pupils can generally communicate well enough to be understood in both speaking and writing. They understand spoken French better than written French. Higher attaining pupils achieve similar levels in each of the four skill areas.

194 In recent years, small numbers of pupils have taken Russian in addition to French. The percentage gaining A* to C grades has been broadly in line with the national averages for less commonly taught languages. In Year 11, standards are broadly average. Most pupils can write letters and narratives using a variety of tenses and can use these tenses in speaking. They have good levels of attainment in reading and listening to Russian.

195 The higher attaining pupils in Year 10 who are studying German as a second foreign language began learning it at the beginning of this school year. They show a high level of commitment and interest and have made very good progress to date. They are on course to attain good GCSE grades at the end of Year 11.

196 The faculty has recently begun writing targets for some pupils with special educational needs. These are helping teachers and pupils to concentrate on what pupils need to do to improve and thus are contributing well to pupils' learning and progress. In general, pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with that of their peers. In the better lessons they make more progress than might be expected.

Teaching

197 Teaching in the faculty is very mixed, ranging from excellent to poor. Almost a third of lessons seen were excellent, and a further tenth were very good. This excellent and very good teaching is characterised by very lively presentation following from meticulous planning and preparation of a wide range of activities, all of which involve and interest pupils and motivate them to learn. Many different ways of practising new words and structures, using a good mixture of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, ensure that pupils become thoroughly familiar with them before going on to use them to communicate with others. In these lessons, not a moment is wasted. Often the lesson ends with a more light-hearted activity such as a game using the words learned in the lessons, which leaves the pupils keen to return to the next lesson. Teachers use the language they are teaching routinely to speak to pupils, who are thus encouraged to use it themselves. For example in a small group of lower attaining pupils the teacher asked pupils individually whether they wanted felt pens or coloured pencils to complete an exercise to show they understood the French words for colours.

Because she offered the choice in French the pupils naturally responded in French. The assessment of pupils' work is very good, especially in Year 11.

198 Around a third of teaching was unsatisfactory, and some of this was poor. In most of these lessons the work pupils were asked to do was not well matched to their prior attainment. They were not given sufficient opportunity to build up their knowledge of new language before being expected to show they could use it. At times the lesson moved too quickly and work was left unfinished. This resulted in unsatisfactory learning. Some pupils were reluctant to take part in lessons because, as a result of the way it was presented, they found the work too difficult. In some lessons, unsatisfactory management of pupils' behaviour meant that time was wasted and this impeded learning.

199 Pupils' attitudes to lessons and their behaviour vary according to the quality of teaching. Often attitudes and behaviour are very good or excellent. Pupils concentrate well, are enthusiastic and work hard throughout the lesson. Where teaching is unsatisfactory pupils are at best reluctant to learn, and at times restless and inattentive.

Management

200 The faculty is very well led and managed by a newly appointed head of faculty, ably supported by a second in faculty, and there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. There are very good, newly written teaching schemes to help teachers in their planning. The department has developed an extensive range of extra-curricular activity much praised and valued by pupils. This includes annual trips to Germany and France and regular clubs during the school week. In answer to the criticisms raised by the last inspection, pupils now regularly read longer texts in French. The regular use of dictionaries in lessons and the provision of revision booklets and extra revision classes at lunchtimes and after school are improving their personal study habits. Teaching and pupils' progress is well monitored, and positive steps have been taken to bring about improvements where necessary. The provision of resources has greatly improved, but there are still insufficient textbooks for pupils to take them home for homework. Staff in the faculty work hard to overcome this problem by providing materials to support pupils.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

201 At Key stage 3 drama, music and dance are taught as separate but complementary elements within the expressive arts faculty. Inspection findings are presented in this report under appropriate separate subjects headings.

202 At Key Stage 4 standards in GCSE expressive arts are at national expectations. The thematic approach to the faculty's work provides a coherent entitlement of content. The aims and general objectives of the work are clear and appropriate, but more detailed learning objectives to underpin and accelerate progress are yet to be developed. Pupils are able to talk about their work and evaluate its impact in general terms, but are less good at identifying precise areas for improvement.

203 Pupils enjoy GCSE expressive arts, but girls are more likely than boys to choose the subject and participate more readily. The quality of teaching and learning is, in almost all cases, at least satisfactory, sometimes good and occasionally excellent, despite difficulties in ensuring qualified specialist staffing recently. Where teachers work in more than one discipline, they bring freshness and parallel strategies to bear in highly effective ways.

204 The faculty is very well led. The ethos is hard-working, co-operative and very supportive of the pupils. There is much positive extra-curricular provision of a high standard. The potential of expressive arts at both key stages to widen horizons and forms of expression is yet to be stated clearly within the fuller aims and values of the school.

DRAMA

Standards

205 GCSE drama results are below national averages and were below those of the same pupils in other subjects in 1999, but these results run counter to the trend of previous years in which attainment was close to national averages. Lack of specialist space for drama during the building programme has now been resolved. Pupils of all abilities enjoy drama, but higher standards are achieved by girls than boys in the main. Standards in lessons are close to the national expectation in improvisation and response, but below expectation in some aspects of performance, particularly the use of voice and stagecraft. The subject contributes well to speaking and listening and some aspects of reading through scripted work, but opportunities for enhancing literacy through practised choral and performance reading the examination of relationships and character through active investigation of words and phrases in movement are less well represented in units of work. High expectations that pupils will work co-operatively develop very good standards of improvisation, but there is a lack of confidence among a significant number of pupils, particularly boys. Although teaching introduces mixed gender work from Year 7, most observed lessons maintained separate groups and boys received fewer good models of extended expression. Absence limits standards significantly. A number of GCSE candidates had missed rehearsal time for their exam piece to the detriment of themselves and to the ensemble working.

206 Pupils enjoy drama lessons and are very well motivated to learn. A significant number participate in expressive arts programmes, including extra-curricular productions. Pupils behave very well in drama and follow conventions for listening and working together. Although they normally work in friendship groups, some lessons actively place pupils in other situations and develop more open relationships and understanding through doing so. Lessons are characterised by a friendly, helpful and supportive atmosphere. In the best lessons, there is a proper emphasis on responding to drama, enabling pupils to think about their developing performance and comment on the underpinning motivations and feelings. Pupils learn to be independent. They make choices, decisions and formulate responses. They are properly expected to generate their own drama for performance to others both in GCSE lessons and for external audiences.

Teaching

207 There are consistently high standards of teaching and learning in drama, although there is currently some lack of continuity because of a staffing shortage. The faculty has worked hard to ameliorate this situation and GCSE groups are well covered by specialist teaching. Teaching shows very good subject knowledge particularly in methods for exploring and creating through improvisation and response. Lessons are well planned against clear units of work, but learning objectives are sometimes too general. More specific and progressive objectives for drama skills, knowledge and understanding are needed to raise expectations and the level of challenge. Pupils are very well managed and teachers have a clear and personal view of progress based on a termly assessment model, but pupils are often unable to articulate areas for their improvement beyond general targets. Teachers often praise pupils appropriately and, in the best practice, link the praise to specific achievement and targets for extending skills and quality of response.

208 Pupils work hard in drama. They show interest and are increasingly able to sustain concentration. Teaching observes the connections between the expressive arts disciplines through shared themes, but occasionally the theme rather than the learning to be achieved through the theme dominates the teaching and learning.

209 Drama is powerfully taught within the personal experiences of the pupils, but the generation and exploration of rich contexts in worlds beyond the normal for the pupils are less well developed. The current approach can lead to a lack of challenge and imaginative extension. Although techniques of hot-seating and freeze-frame are used very well by teachers, other deepening processes of tableau, thought tracking, forum theatre, corridor of advice, heightened movement and support voices need planned use even in later stages of performance preparation. Pupils work independently very well in Key Stage 4, but most do not use these systems to refine and develop their performance.

Management

210 Themes underpin the planning of drama. Classes are in mixed ability groups except in Year 9 when pupils following a second language miss the programme and the sets for languages impose setted drama lessons. The expressive arts programme, including dance and music as well as drama, enables significant numbers of pupils to perform for audiences beyond themselves. Over the last few years, there have been regular school productions, ensemble productions for small groups, festival work both locally and internationally. Such work makes a significant contribution to independent and self-reliant learning. Drama has the potential to inform and enrich celebration throughout the school both as part of expressive arts and in presentations like the celebration assemblies.

211 The ethos for drama is characterised by friendly, open, co-operative and hard working approaches. There are excellent relationships with others in the faculty and a resourceful ability to marshal support when staffing is under pressure.

MUSIC

Standards

212 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below average. Rhythm is the most practised and developed musical element but other elements are explored through composing, performing and listening. Effective performing is hindered by fundamental weaknesses in holding a steady pulse and difficulty in reading musical notation. Pupils respond positively to a range of stimuli in composition but generally lack techniques to fulfil their ideas totally in practice.

213 Last years results in GCSE indicate a below average performance at the end of Key Stage 4. The work seen with Year 10 pupils would suggest that there is some improvement, although limited performing and notational skills are still an issue for some pupils.

214 Pupils start Key Stage 3 with only very basic musical skills and understanding. With only one 50 minute lesson per week progress is slow and pupils are not attaining all of the end of key stage descriptions outlined in the National Curriculum. This skill deficit continues at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) although some pupils are now able to make more satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 3 the subject is taught within a framework of topics - some general, others more closely musically focused. This structures provides many interesting activities, but it does not always provide an adequate framework for promoting and checking progress in musical skills, understanding and awareness.

215 Pupils in general respond positively to the work in this subject and there are examples of high levels of motivation, particularly when the aims are clear and the end product achievable. Composing and performing in small groups form a significant component of the curriculum. Pupils work co-operatively and take responsibility for their work. Many pupils rehearse instruments in their own time, especially those who find it difficult to do so at home. These skills are encouraged in both key stages in the practical classroom. School productions encourage singing and playing in the band. The school

puts on termly expressive arts Evenings which include a diverse range of musical items and involve large numbers of pupils. Pupils also give performances in assemblies and whole classes perform for their peers.

Teaching

216 Teachers plan lessons and schemes of work within the topic framework. Lessons are taught at an appropriate pace using a range of teaching strategies and styles. The needs of more able pupils are better met than in the previous inspection through setting in some year groups and the use of resources and tasks which are challenging their ability. Pupils are encouraged to understand what they are doing and to assess how well they have done and how they can improve. Greater progress might be secured if aims and objectives were clearly expressed in terms of the musical skills to be developed within an activity. This would make assessment more focused on the musical skills identified in the programmes of study in the National Curriculum and, importantly, help shape the planning of future lessons and schemes of work.

217 Peripatetic instrumental teachers provide small group tuition in brass, guitar, woodwind, violin and electronic keyboard. In total this is less than ten hours. The department should seek to extend this provision and provide regular ensemble experience in the school for all instrumentalists. Resources in terms of space and equipment are generally adequate with a well organised bank of electronic keyboards and ICT provision in one of the two music studios. The blocking of the timetable means that the same resources are needed by two classes at the same time; this can be particularly difficult in terms of space for small group work.

Management

218 The subject has made good progress since the previous inspection. Numbers of pupils opting for music are increasing, particularly in this year where they have almost doubled. The head of faculty has introduced an ongoing programme of classroom observation, review of teaching strategies, monitoring and evaluation of learning. This is raising the quality of learning and pupil achievement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION INCLUDING DANCE

Standards

219 Standards in physical education are broadly in line with standards achieved by pupils nationally. By the end of Key Stage 4 they are generally consistent with average standards nationally and occasionally better, particularly in dance and soccer. Standards at Key Stage 3 are more variable with attainment in rugby and some dance lessons below expectation nationally and in line with national expectations in swimming, athletics and badminton. Standards in dance are directly related to the quality of teaching with high quality work to create individual and paired balances at Key Stage 3 and imaginative development of quality group sequences using various levels at Key Stage 4. The ability to plan and evaluate performance is also of a high standard where teaching is very good. Elsewhere in Key Stage 4, boys display good levels of skill in passing, control and shooting in soccer and good technique in using overarm and drop shots in badminton. By contrast, tackling, support play and decision making in rugby are of a poorer quality. Overall, pupils have higher levels of basic skill than they have the ability to analyse, plan and evaluate their work. At Key Stage 3 they often lack confidence in their ability and have difficulty with decision making and more complex activities. Standards in GCSE are below average with boys achieving higher standards overall than girls.

220 In most lessons pupils show evidence of prior learning and experience and in general, have a positive attitude to learning. They will generally apply themselves to tasks set, but rarely show initiative or develop the work themselves. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3, where they are more dependent on teacher direction and have difficulty in deciding on their own best way of learning and committing themselves firmly to this. Progress is, therefore, often limited, although where teaching was set out to encourage greater independence in dance pupils responded well, accepted responsibility and made very good progress during the lesson. Pupils are generally well behaved, respect their teachers and co-operate with one another. They compete enthusiastically and fairly and often encourage and advise one another. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 4 where they have an open and relaxed relationship with each other and their teachers. At Key Stage 3, a minority of pupils, mainly boys, lack concentration and commitment to their work. Their behaviour is disruptive and slows down progress in lessons.

Teaching

221 The quality of teaching is only rarely less than satisfactory overall and is good or better in a third of lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are clear in their explanation and demonstration and are systematic in the implementation of their planning. They manage pupils, equipment and resources efficiently and generally maintain good standards of discipline. The relationships that the teachers have with pupils are good and this is a strength of the department. Where teaching is good or better it has high expectations of pupils, clearly focused learning objectives and work is varied to match to pupils' abilities. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace with the emphasis on practical application and with the teacher achieving an appropriate balance of praise, encouragement and specific feedback to assist individual and group learning. Where teaching is weaker it is characterised by a lack of clarity in planning, low expectations and little or no feedback to pupils. In general, teaching could be improved by involving pupils more in activities that will encourage them to take greater responsibility for their learning and in developing questioning technique.

Management

222 The physical education department is part of the Expressive Arts faculty. This is a relatively recent development and has yet to reach its full potential. There has been some cross faculty development work on whole school issues such as assessment, on the monitoring of teaching and learning, but as yet a faculty philosophy has not developed. There is a need for the physical education department to review its work in gymnastics to ensure a complementary approach with dance and to consider what role, if any, it has in the development of dance. In addition, faculty managers need to review curriculum provision in physical education and, in particular, the core curriculum at Key Stage 4 which currently offers only limited opportunities for pupils to develop skills and knowledge in areas of specialism. Further work needs to be done on teaching and learning styles with greater emphasis put on encouraging pupils take initiative in tackling learning. Professional development opportunities for teachers have been limited in recent years and this will need to be remedied if improvements in the quality of provision are to be made. Similarly, if teachers are to improve levels of attainment in physical education the school will need to review its current timetabling arrangements. The 50 minute lesson does not allow sufficient time to develop applied practical work in physical education and this is, at present, restricting the progress that pupils are making. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunity for boys and girls, including the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and successful participation in a variety of sports in Barnsley Schools' league competitions.

223 Since the last inspection the school has moved on to one site and all physical education activity is located in the dual use leisure centre and adjoining outdoor facilities. Whilst this is a big improvement on former facilities the department is only beginning to realise the potential and plan their work accordingly. The loss of the gymnasium and changing facilities to fire at the old building has restricted the development of the curriculum and teaching and learning processes and long-term absence from two members of the faculty during this school year has also had an impact on development and standards. As a result the department has not made as much progress as it would have liked since the last inspection and is aware of the areas where it needs to improve. However, given the circumstances within which it has had to work the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

224 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in religious education, are slightly below the expectations of the Barnsley Agreed Syllabus. The school is in the process of reviewing its RE curriculum in order to fulfil the requirements of the new agreed syllabus. Evidence of pupils' work and end of unit tests, suggests that attainment is now broadly in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus, in Year 8. The majority of pupils are gaining knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism, throughout Key Stage 3. The conceptual framework and capacity to evaluate are less well developed, however, and when pupils are studying Sikhism, for example, they need to explore and demonstrate understanding of the symbolic meaning of the 5 ks (protection, justice, unity, truth) and crucial concepts such as 'identity' and 'belonging'.

225 Pupils are, however, confident in their knowledge base of Christianity, although there is less evidence of their understanding of the place and meaning of belief in the life experiences of people. For example, in the Year 9 unit, 'Christian beliefs about death and beyond', pupils use terms such as 'resurrection', 'cremation', 'burial', 'soul', 'spirit' 're-incarnation' accurately and with confidence. However, there is little evidence of pupils discussing their views and feelings, listening to those of others and developing new insights. Where pupils are enabled to do this, they do so, well.

226 At the end of Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils attain standards which are just below the expectations of the agreed syllabus. There is evidence to suggest that this is rapidly improving, in particular, the response of pupils to the rigour and challenge of the GCSE short course in religious education. In 1999, three pupils took the full GCSE religious studies, achieving 67 per cent A-C grades. Fifty-eight pupils were entered for the GCSE short course, achieving 17 per cent A-C grades. This year, all Year 10 pupils are following the GCSE short course in RE, which will extend into Year 11 from September.

227 More able pupils are able to talk with confidence about, arguments for and against euthanasia and abortion. However, their capacity to evaluate based upon a knowledge base of religious and non-religious viewpoints, particularly in Year 11, is less well developed. This area of work again, where there is good, rigorous teaching, is rapidly improving. In one lesson observed, Year 10 pupils' knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, teachings and practice of Islam, and evaluation of what Islam has to say, about contemporary issues for society, were at national expectations for Year 10 cohort. The progress which many pupils were making, given their ability and prior attainment, was excellent.

228 Less able pupils at both key stages, however, need more structure to progress their learning and conceptual development. They are often completing the same tasks as the rest of the class, with help from a curriculum support assistant, but their understanding is not really being developed.

Teaching

229 The quality of teaching at both key stages is at least satisfactory or better, with one excellent lesson being observed during the week of the inspection. Good features of lessons are clear aims and objectives, where purposes of discussion and activities, are clear to pupils. Questioning is effective in engaging the whole class, drawing out pupils' responses, helping pupils make connections with prior learning, contemporary issues and their own life experience. In the good lessons pupils are required to interpret, analyse, reflect and evaluate and where language and concepts are clearly identified and taught.

230 Pupils' work is conscientiously marked. However, marking policy and comments should be further developed to help pupils understand what and how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. A particular strength, is the development of a sense of morality as well as factual knowledge, which has a clear and effective impact upon the personal development of pupils. Teachers' command and coverage of the subject are good. Planning reflects clear learning outcomes for what pupils are expected to know, understand and be able to do. Expectations could be higher in some lessons and examples of previous work from high attaining pupils could be used to set standards.

231 The department has developed appropriately rigorous end of unit tests; however, there is a need to develop routine assessment criteria, linked to learning objectives, and end of key stage assessment. It seems quite illogical that there are no school-based examinations in RE, when they exist for all other subjects in the school.

232 Homework is generally used effectively to further develop learning. There are no examples of pupils simply 'finishing off' work, or 'colouring work in'. Pupils are always required to research or think about an issue or aspect of the subject. ICT is effectively used to enhance learning, in particular to support individual research and independent learning.

233 Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally very good. They are enthusiastic and participate well in discussion and activity. They are confident, raise questions and some very mature contributions were observed during the week of the inspection. Relationships with one another, teachers and other adults are very good. There is a good atmosphere of mutual respect appropriate for the discussion of religious and sensitive issues. Behaviour is consistently very good.

Management

234 The head of department had been off ill for two months at the time of the inspection. Priority should now be given to reviewing the scheme of work, both in relation to providing appropriate levels of challenge for the pupils and to fulfilling the requirements of the Barnsley Agreed Syllabus. There is too heavy a reliance upon worksheets, some of which are of less than satisfactory quality and although resourcing of RE has improved since the last inspection, there is still insufficient quantity and variety of text books at both key stages.

235 The time allocation for RE is still below national recommendations, in particular the afternoon lessons which are only 45 minutes in duration.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

Standards

236 A very good range of intermediate and foundation GNVQ courses is provided at Key Stage 4. This includes art and design, information technology, health and social care, hospitality and catering, and built environment. These courses are very popular with pupils and significantly enhance the range and quality of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. They are actively promoted within the school and the local business community.

237 In 1999 83 per cent of pupils completing the full courses achieved a pass grade in art and design and the remainder achieved some GNVQ units. About a quarter of pupils are gaining merit or distinction. This is above the national average for GNVQ attainment in Art and Design and a very good achievement for the school. In lessons pupils are achieving good levels of attainment in the mandatory and optional vocational units and in the core units of communication, application of number and information technology. Students can offer reasoned views on the main risks to health for different age groups. Investigative skills are employed successfully, for example to research the impact of health education campaigns in schools. In order to explore the feasibility of a range of his own ideas in a catering assignment a student with special educational needs was competently analysing a range of source material for ideas to support his design brief. Completed work in assignments meets GNVQ criteria in terms of technical confidence in vocational context and practical application of learning.

238 Progress in vocational units is satisfactory and frequently good or better. Pupils of all abilities progress equally well, including those with special educational needs. They are confident and articulate in talking about their work and show good rates of progress with work in their design schedules and coursework assignments. Progress is similarly good with the core skills of communication, application of number and information technology.

239 Pupils' attitudes to learning are mainly good and often very good. They are very positive about the assignment based method of working. They are able to work well independently and show a mature attitude to working together and supporting each other's learning. Work is characterised by high levels of energy, willingness and concentration and this enables the development of good research skills and competence in evaluating a range of source material. More able pupils show good levels of initiative and are willing to choose their own best working routines and pursue them to achieve worthwhile learning. Many pupils are well organised and self-reliant.

Teaching

240 The quality of teaching in vocational courses is mainly good, often very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers plan the programmes well and have embraced the concept of GNVQ. Lessons are well prepared with a good range of resources provided to support students' investigation tasks and design work. Learning is well organised with a good range of activity suited to the GNVQ requirements. For example in an information technology GNVQ assignment lesson pupils had carefully discussed the client specifications, drawn information from a range of source material and used the computers in their teaching base to produce some very well presented books to support reading in local primary schools. Teachers give good clear explanations and use probing questioning to test and increase understanding. Pupils are provided with a good range of individual tasks suited to their abilities and vocational assignments. There is a good atmosphere in lessons reflecting the pupils' maturity and very good relationships.

241 Courses are allocated appropriate amounts of time and are well planned in order to provide good connections and learning steps from Key Stage 3 and into further education beyond Key Stage 4. Good organisation enables access for pupils' of a wide range of ability, including those with special educational needs. The arrangement with Barnsley College to provide the built environment course works well. Assessment is careful and thorough and internal verification is used effectively to support planning and assure standards. Pupils benefit from the thoroughness of teachers' marking and the speed of turn-around of their work.

242 Vocational courses make a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. In-depth discussions about what is right and wrong with human activity covering a wide range of social issues increase pupils' understanding and influence fundamental attitudes towards self and others. Cultural self-awareness and understanding of the beliefs, cultures and customs of people from other countries are increased when pupils research vocational themes with an international dimension. This is especially true in the art and design course.

243 Vocational courses are well organised and proficiently managed by the co-ordinator. There is good evidence of mapping of course content leading to effective training of GNVQ course providers. Development planning is good with clear vision and suitable targets for further development in course provision. This necessarily includes recruiting viable numbers of pupils onto the vocational courses which are expensive on staffing and other resources. Internal systems for monitoring the quality of course provision are well developed. The team of teachers who provide vocational education is well led. Vocational courses are taught by experienced staff with appropriate qualifications for teaching and assessing GNVQ. Accommodation is good and well used by staff and students. Learning resources are sufficient in quantity and of a good quality. Pupils have access to modern computers, modern textbooks and a good range of research materials. Resources are well used and the department provides good value for money.