

INSPECTION REPORT

CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Frenchwood, Preston

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119781

Headteacher: A Van Cauwelaert

Reporting inspector: Ted Wheatley
10013

Dates of inspection: 7th - 10th May 2002

Inspection number: 191180

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lawrence Avenue Frenchwood Preston Lancashire
Postcode:	PR1 4LX
Telephone number:	(01772) 252072
Fax number:	(01772) 885674
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Allen
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject Responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10013	Ted Wheatley	Registered inspector		How high are standards? How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9974	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3758	Anthony Barringer	Team inspector	English	
27416	Tom Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Science	
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art and design English as an additional language	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
10316	Norman Bertram	Team inspector	History	
12118	Allan Paver	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music	
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5 - 9
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10 - 13
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13 - 15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15 - 18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18 - 20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20 - 21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21 - 23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT	25
THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26 - 30
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31 - 51

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Christ The King Catholic High School has 423 pupils and is smaller than other 11-16 comprehensive schools. There are similar numbers of boys and girls and overall numbers are increasing. Just over half of pupils are from Catholic families with many others from families of different faiths. Many pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and many live in local authority or other rented housing. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. Forty per cent of pupils have English as an additional language and 11 of these pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The other main languages spoken are Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali. Almost half of the pupils come from ethnic minorities, mainly Indian, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Black African. One hundred and twenty five pupils are supported through ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) funding. The percentage of pupils with statements of special need or who are on the school's register of special educational needs is well above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average and literacy skills of many are very poor.

The school is part of the Preston Education Action Zone (EAZ) and benefits from Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It is an improving school that has a very clear direction about how it can continue to improve. Teaching is good and standards are rising. The very good community and race relations are creating a friendly, harmonious ethos and there is a very good partnership for learning between pupils, parents and the school. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The great majority of pupils make good progress as they move through the school.
- Teaching, which is often very good and sometimes excellent.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language is very good.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
- The good quality support and guidance provided by all staff, including the school chaplain.
- The very good provision for the personal development of pupils and for their spiritual, moral and social development.
- The good leadership and management of the school, the very clear direction for improvement provided by the headteacher and the high level of involvement of governors in the school's development.

What could be improved

- Standards achieved by some pupils.
- Attendance.
- The range of links with colleges to expand vocational educational provision.
- The use of assessment information to analyse performance of subjects and plan further improvements.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since it was inspected in January 1997. Attendance has improved, the school has effective systems to monitor and evaluate its work and pupils have more opportunities to display personal responsibility. The curriculum has developed to better meet the needs of pupils and the school has dealt with health and safety issues raised. Teaching has improved and standards have risen.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In the end of Year 9 national tests in 2001 the attainment of pupils was well below average and the percentage of pupils obtaining the average Level 5 in English, mathematics and science was below average. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average in mathematics and science and average in English. Compared with standards on entry to the school this is good and over the last three years results have improved.

Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average in all three subjects but indicate that standards are continuing to rise and that pupils achieve well. In other subjects standards were below average overall; they were above average in information and communication technology (ICT), average in art, design and technology, Spanish and music and below average in geography, history and physical education.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were well below average. The percentages of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades and A*-G grades were well below average and the percentage obtaining one or more A*-C grades was close to the average, which is good for this school. Compared with similar schools results were above average overall in 2001 and well above average for those pupils obtaining one or more A*-G grades. Results have improved in recent years. The school met its targets for five or more A*-C grades and exceeded them for one or more A*-G grades. Standards seen during the inspection were below average overall; they were above average in music and Spanish, average in art, design and technology and ICT, below average in history and physical education and well below average in geography. However, pupils generally achieve well over time and have made good progress from Year 9.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils who are in the early stages of acquiring English language make good progress, as do pupils from all ethnic groups. The highest attainers make satisfactory progress overall and some make good progress; the progress of a few is unsatisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good. The great majority are enthusiastic towards school and all of the activities it provides. Pupils work hard and as a result make good progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around school is very good. Pupils respond well to the school's expectations for behaviour and treat other people and the school with respect.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and pupils show initiative and take responsibility whenever possible. The relationships between different ethnic groups are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory overall, but has improved significantly since the last inspection, absences having reduced by a third.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

Teaching is good and in about one third of lessons it is very good and sometimes excellent. It is never unsatisfactory. In English and mathematics teaching is very good and in science it is satisfactory, though much is good there too. Teaching in art and music is very good; it is satisfactory in geography, Spanish and physical education and good elsewhere. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is generally good, although the school's literacy strategy is not fully implemented. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects is good.

Overall, learning by the great majority of pupils is good. The progress made by most pupils, whatever their prior attainment, ethnicity, or command of English language, is good. Occasionally, learning is inhibited by poor literacy skills.

In most subjects there are strengths in the relationships between teachers and pupils, teachers' subject knowledge and the quality of marking, that is often used effectively to guide and advise pupils in how to improve their work. This has a positive effect on how well pupils learn and achieve over time. Expectations are generally high, though in physical education they are unsatisfactory for developing the practical skills of some pupils and for the highest attainers in geography. Homework is usually used effectively by teachers to support classroom learning, with the exception of science where it is inconsistent.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good and it is also good for other pupils, whatever their ethnic background or prior attainment. The quality of support for individual pupils, including those with English as an additional language is very good and contributes to their good learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good with a wide range of opportunities for the majority of pupils. The introduction of vocational GCSE ICT courses has improved the range of courses available for pupils. There are limited links with colleges to provide a wide enough range of courses for disaffected pupils or for those who need a less academic education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good with well planned support through a programme of withdrawal from lessons and support from learning assistants in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The majority of pupils are not in the early stages of English language acquisition but, for those who are, provision is very good with well-organised support by specialist staff.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for all elements of spiritual, moral and social development is very good and there are many opportunities for pupils' personal development. The school provides a strong Catholic ethos but with an emphasis on understanding and valuing the cultures and traditions of all of its pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The level of care is very good. The personal support and guidance pupils receive is very good and pupils receive clear guidance, particularly in Years 10 and 11 on how to raise standards. Assessment information is used to set targets, although some teachers are not confident in its use.

The partnerships between parents and the school are very good. The majority of parents support the school very well and there is a high level of attendance at parents' meetings.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and key staff and the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very clear direction for the school's development and improvement. The headteacher respects and values the contribution of staff and in return they are committed to the school's further improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are knowledgeable and supportive of the school. They fulfil their responsibilities fully and take an active part in its development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior staff evaluate the school's performance effectively and as a result there is a comprehensive, clearly prioritised improvement plan. At departmental level, there is some good evaluation but this is not consistently so.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its financial resources. It is imaginative in raising extra funds and plans carefully to get the best value for what it spends to provide the best education it can for its pupils.

The school is well staffed and its accommodation is good for the pupils it has at present, though numbers are rising. Learning resources are satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • Teaching is good and the school has high expectations of children. • Children make good progress. • The school keeps parents well informed about children's progress. • The school works closely with parents and deals with their concerns effectively. • The school is well led and managed. • Children become mature and responsible. • There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. 	<p>Parents have no strong concerns about the school.</p>

There was high level of return of the questionnaires sent to parents and the response was very positive. At the meeting held for parents before the inspection the response of parents to the school was very positive. They are very pleased with the commitment of the headteacher and staff, the quality of education and the support that the school gives to both pupils and parents. They are also impressed with the school's approaches to valuing the ethnicity of its pupils and the policy on dealing with racism.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average in English, mathematics and science and their literacy skills are very poor. A significant proportion of pupils need support with developing their literacy skills and some also receive support to develop their skills in English language because English is not their first language. There is some variation between years on entry to the school but standards are still low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average.
2. In the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science in 2001 the attainment of pupils was well below the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the average Level 5 or higher in English, mathematics and science was below average and the percentage obtaining Level 6 or higher was well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. While levels of attainment were low, considering their attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieved well and this reflects well on the work of the school. Compared with similar schools, standards were well above average overall, well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. The proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5 or higher and Level 6 or higher was well above average in mathematics and science. In English, the proportion obtaining Level 5 or higher was above average and for Level 6 or higher was average. Results have improved over several years and at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Performance is a reflection of the work done by teachers and even though attainment in English is below that of mathematics and science, progress from when pupils entered school has been good. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language and pupils from ethnic minorities.
3. Inspection evidence shows that standards by the age of 14 are below average overall. They are below average in English, mathematics and science, indicating further progress since the previous year's end of Year 9 national tests. Standards are above average in ICT (information and communication technology) and this is a direct result of the work done to improve the quality of provision in the subject. In art and design, design and technology and music standards are broadly average. They are also average in Spanish, but here boys reach higher levels than girls and, in particular, boys from ethnic minority groups do very well. Standards are below average in geography, history and physical education. In geography and history, the highest attainers are not always sufficiently challenged and in physical education the teaching of physical skills is not always demanding enough.
4. Nevertheless, the great majority of pupils achieve well and many achieve very well taking into account low attainment on entering the school. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well and receive a high level of support to help them. Pupils from different ethnic groups also achieve well, mainly because the school's approach to teaching is to support pupils' individual needs; this is effective. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, mainly because of the high quality of support, both within lessons and through withdrawal from lessons for specific help. Progress is also good in the development of literacy skills when pupils in Year 7 attend their weekly reading enrichment classes. The most able pupils generally achieve satisfactorily and in most subjects they achieve well.
5. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001, attainment was well below the national average, but was above average compared with similar schools. While the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades was well below the national average, it was average compared with pupils in similar schools and though the percentage obtaining five or more A*-G grades was well below the national average, it was above average compared with similar schools. The percentage obtaining at least one A*-G grade GCSE was in line with the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Overall, the school met its targets for five or more A*-C grades and exceeded

them for one or more A*-G grades. It has done well by the majority of its pupils. GCSE results were broadly similar between subjects, though they were worst in geography, history and English language. In history and geography this reflects the occasional lack of challenge for some higher attainers. In English the difficulty of raising standards of literacy continues, though the pace of progress is as good as in most other subjects taking into account the very low starting point. In Spanish, standards were broadly in line with other subjects overall, though boys do particularly well. Overall, there are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language and pupils from ethnic minorities. Over recent years the trend in the school's results has been upwards at a faster rate than the national trend.

6. Standards in Year 11 during the inspection were below average overall. In music and Spanish standards are above average. In music this is because there is a small number of able pupils following the subject. In Spanish the performance of boys heavily outweighs the performance of girls because of their enthusiasm and skill with oral work. Standards are broadly average in art and design, design and technology and ICT. They are below average in English, mathematics, science, history and physical education and they are well below average in geography. The difference in geography is due to the fact that there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils in the class and this is true also for history though to a lesser extent. In physical education the teaching of practical skills, as in Years 7 to 9, is too undemanding.
7. As with pupils in Years 7 to 9, the pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs receive considerable support and they progress well too, working at levels commensurate with or above their levels of capability. Progress is good when pupils are supported in class by classroom support assistants or when withdrawn to undertake progress units to support the development of their literacy skills. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well because of the specific support they receive; those from different ethnic backgrounds are well supported as required – so they achieve well too. Pupils who are able mostly achieve satisfactorily, with the exception of geography and history. Underperformance is also evident among the pupils who attend school irregularly and while the problem has improved since the last inspection, it still persists with a smaller percentage of pupils.
8. Pupils' literacy skills are generally below average but they improve considerably as they move through the school. Strategies to teach literacy skills are having a positive impact on pupils' progress in the ability to express themselves both in speech and writing and to understand what they read. Pupils learn key terminology in most subjects because it is displayed in classrooms and their attention is drawn to it. In design and technology, for example, technical terminology is explained and pupils are encouraged to read for research and extension of knowledge. In most subjects pupils' writing skills develop well because teachers use writing frames to guide pupils. Standards of presentation are generally sound but handwriting of lower attaining pupils, for example, in modern foreign language is poorly formed. Speaking and listening are still to be addressed overall but some departments are already using talk and discussion as an essential and effective way to enhance pupils' learning. In art, pupils discuss ideas and offer opinions and judgements and in a Year 7 history lesson about Norman England, pupils were encouraged to speak at length and to explore ideas through discussion. In mathematics, talk is used effectively to promote learning but has not been fully developed in science, geography or physical education.
9. The general level of numeracy within the school is average and supports learning across the curriculum. Pupils display satisfactory numeracy skills in their work in geography, history, music, design technology, ICT and science. They have a good understanding of time, use graphs and develop good arithmetic skills through adding up bills and converting currency in Spanish lessons. Pupils use formulae and calculations in spreadsheets.
10. Overall, pupils' achieve well in developing their ICT skills as they move through the school and there are opportunities in most subjects for them to do so. In art pupils successfully use web sites to further their research into Art Deco. In mathematics lessons they use spreadsheets, helping to improve their calculation skills. In English lessons pupils use their word processing skills to good effect, combining text and images. In geography there are too few opportunities for pupils to use and develop their ICT skills. Higher attaining pupils use their own time to complete course work

assignments using word processing and desktop publishing. Pupils also access the Internet to carry out research for projects. Pupils of all abilities and from different backgrounds use ICT successfully and their skills develop well.

11. The school has used funds from the education action zone (EAZ) effectively to provide support from mentors and for courses and visits for pupils. The effect has been to raise levels of motivation and improve attendance of some pupils and to provide individual support so that standards, particularly among disaffected pupils, have improved.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour and values are very good and reinforce their very constructive and purposeful relationships with each other and adults. This enables pupils to serve their school and community in a very responsible and mature manner. Pupils' attitudes to school have improved since the last inspection and this is a reflection of the efforts of the school to maintain a community where there is a high level of respect for different cultural and religious backgrounds and also to continue to improve the opportunities for pupils to achieve well.
13. The attitude of pupils to school is very good and often very good in lessons. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievements and personal and social development. Most pupils show interest in their work and sustain concentration well in most English, mathematics, design and technology and ICT lessons. They take pride in the presentation of their work and make a positive contribution to discussions. Most pupils, particularly Asian boys, display positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language. In Spanish lessons they are attentive to instructions and enjoy oral presentations and derive enjoyment from practising their speech. Although concentration is good in most lessons, a significant minority of boys have difficulty in sustaining concentration and some are easily distracted. This was evident amongst some lower attainers in some physical education and mathematics lessons. In many subjects across the school there are few opportunities for pupils to work independently and make effective use of their initiative. However, in a very well taught geography lesson, Year 7 pupils who were given control of their own learning were completely absorbed in the set tasks. Albeit, some pupils lack some social skills of listening, putting up a hand and not shouting out. Pupils have a very positive attitude to teachers and value and respect their skills as teachers.
14. The behaviour of pupils around the school and in many lessons is very good. As a result the school offers a calm, friendly and harmonious environment for learning. Almost all pupils are friendly, welcoming, polite and courteous to staff and visitors. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school, including a disabled female pupil who moves around school in a wheelchair.
15. There is little disruption in most lessons and, when given the opportunity pupils are able to work in pairs and small groups in a sensible manner. This has a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress. In a very small minority of lessons, however, weaknesses in planning, organisation or class management led to some incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour by a minority. Most commonly, this involves older boys who occasionally indulge in minor attention seeking behaviour, particularly in the presence of girls. Pupils are generally trustworthy. Most show respect for the school grounds, buildings, furniture and school equipment and there are few signs of vandalism; that which there is, is often caused by outsiders. Behaviour at lunchtimes and during breaks is usually very good. In the dining room most pupils are polite and well mannered and show good social skills. Conduct is orderly and well managed as pupils move around the school. A very small minority are noisy, made worse by congestion during movement between lessons. Although a very small number of pupils express concern about bullying and other types of anti-social behaviour, there have been very few reported incidents of bullying taking place. The school takes a very serious view of any such incidents. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were confident that these incidents are dealt with very effectively by the school. The school has a clear code of conduct with an escalating scale of sanctions, which leads to exclusion. The school works very hard to support pupils who find self-discipline difficult and during the last school year there were

small numbers of fixed-term and one permanent exclusion. The figure is very low in comparison to schools of similar size.

16. Relationships within the school are very good, both among pupils and between pupils and adults. Relationships between the different ethnic groups in the school are very good. Pupils are friendly and respectful towards one another and to other adults around them, particularly to visitors. They show consideration and care for those with physical disability. This contributes to the creation of a very positive learning environment and is significant in pupils' personal development. Pupils find most staff are approachable and can share their ideas with confidence. They listen to views and opinions that differ from their own objectively and with respect. Many of the minority ethnic pupils, particularly girls, are impressed with this aspect of their relationship with staff. When required to do so pupils work well together and share ideas and resources sensibly. These positive relationships prepare pupils to learn and live in a diverse multicultural community and celebrate the Catholic values which are evident in all aspects of learning and development.
17. The personal development of pupils is very good. Pupils display a high level of interest in the school as a multi-racial community and provide thoughtful responses when consulted about such things as the canteen facilities and accommodation. They are also excited about the prospect of discussions about improving learning approaches. They respond positively to the many opportunities they are offered to exercise personal responsibility and show initiative as they progress from Year 7 to Year 11. These opportunities include such things as election to represent their classes on the school council, to serve as prefects, peer counsellors, librarians, to engage in work experience and to raise money for local charities; in addition to the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils take on their responsibilities, for example, as librarians and peer counsellors, with impressive maturity, responsible attitudes and behaviour and establish effective relationships with each other and adults. Pupils have noticeable pride in their school and are mature ambassadors of the school in the wider multi-racial community.
18. Pupils with special educational needs generally behave well. Most pupils with special educational needs are confident they will succeed because they know teachers are aware of their individual needs. On the rare occasions when there are behaviour problems, skilled intervention by classroom support assistants ensures that learning is not seriously disrupted.
19. Attendance is unsatisfactory and unauthorised absence has increased, but figures are broadly in line with similar schools nationally. Authorised absence is high, but has decreased and is primarily due to the small, but significant number of parents who choose to take extended family holidays during term time. This is exacerbated by some pupils whose absence is apparently condoned by their homes. Nevertheless, the majority of pupils like school, attend regularly and are punctual. Most lessons start on time and this evidently supports pupils' learning and achievements. Registers are taken at prescribed times and all absences are rigorously investigated with the very effective support from the educational welfare officer and staff. The strong partnership between school and the welfare service, very effectively supported by local and national initiatives, has enabled the school to significantly raise levels of attendance from 82 per cent at the last inspection to 89 per cent in 2000/01. The school is aware that further improvements are required and is working to achieve new and improved targets.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent in a third of lessons. It is good in four out of ten lessons and satisfactory elsewhere. Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, art and design and music. It is good in design and technology, history and ICT and satisfactory in science, geography, Spanish and physical education. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.
21. Teachers generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They recognise the learning difficulties of a great number of pupils and use this knowledge to plan work so that pupils are challenged but supported in their learning. Where teachers' expectations are at their best, most noticeably in mathematics, art and music, they provide clear lesson objectives, careful

explanations of what work is to be done, a wide range of interesting activities, good pace and individual support for pupils. Pupils react well to this; they feel secure because they know they can turn to teachers for help and they develop confidence in their own abilities to succeed. It is significant that where teachers' expectations are very high, they use assessment information and their knowledge of pupils thoughtfully to plan their lessons to get the most from pupils. As a consequence, pupils' learning is generally good and often very good.

22. In some instances expectations are not high enough and in geography there are examples of higher attaining pupils who do not achieve high enough standards because tasks are not demanding. In physical education, work to develop skills is often not demanding enough of pupils and this has a noticeable effect, particularly, on the performance of the most able pupils.
23. Generally, teachers use a sound range of teaching methods that meet the needs of the great majority of pupils and help them learn well. Opportunities for independent learning are not widespread although there is some good practice. In English, for example, individual reading and creative writing are encouraged and in design and technology pupils are expected to work to their own designs and plans and to arrive at individual solutions. However, opportunities for independent learning are sometimes missed. For example, in science some experimental work does not encourage investigation by pupils but, instead, steers pupils towards a single answer or solution to a problem rather than making pupils think about and test alternative solutions. In geography, there is a tendency to inform and instruct rather than to encourage pupils to research for themselves.
24. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils that provide an effective atmosphere in which learning can take place. In the majority of lessons teachers manage pupils well and considering that there are many pupils who come to school with emotional and behavioural problems, the school does well with them. These pupils are integrated into classes and teachers handle individuals sensitively and make good use of the support staff, pastoral staff and chaplain to ensure that learning and personal difficulties are dealt with swiftly and effectively. On rare occasions the pace of lessons is a little slow and pupils lose interest; their attention wanders and their behaviour deteriorates.
25. The quality of day-to-day assessment is generally good, with the majority of teachers marking work thoroughly and providing useful advice and guidance on how pupils can improve their work. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly where teachers set targets for pupils to strive to achieve. Usually, this information is also used to plan further lessons and while this approach is developing, there is some variation in how well assessment information is used by some teachers. The quality of homework is mostly satisfactory, though occasionally it is insufficient to help some pupils develop good learning skills or to reinforce work done in lessons. Understandably, the school does not wish pupils to take expensive textbooks out of school, but it has not worked out alternative ways to provide challenging homework; this is evident for some pupils in Spanish lessons.
26. Teaching of literacy skills is good overall. Improvement in reading has been a priority in the light of the low level of attainment of many pupils on entry to the school. Key words are clearly displayed and well used in English, mathematics, science, art and history. Pupils with special educational needs receive intensive assistance and support, especially in Years 7 to 9. The development of skills in reading comprehension is a main pre-occupation in English teaching. Improvement of pupils' writing forms the other principal thrust and, as with reading, the response of departments is varied. As well as in English, where such work is fundamental, in design and technology attention has been given to writing design notes and specifications and writing frames are widely used to support extended writing. In history there is very good practice in the planning and development of written work. Writing frames are used to assist the structure of extended writing and these are matched closely to pupils' level of attainment.
27. The teaching of numeracy is good overall. Most subjects make useful contributions to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Teachers plan the use of approaches to improve pupils' numeracy skills. For example, mathematics teachers have accompanied classes during physical education lessons to support pupils' understanding of co-ordinates when orienteering. In design and technology lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop their use of number,

measurement and graphic skills and to develop an understanding of weight, volume and time. In Years 7 to 9 numeracy is used strongly to reinforce the teaching of notation during music lessons and, in art lessons, key words are used to promote awareness of shape and symmetry.

28. The teaching of ICT across the curriculum is good overall and it is improving. There are examples of good ICT teaching in most subjects and very good examples in music. The use of ICT contributes to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills as well as consolidating their ICT skills. Teachers plan their lessons well to include opportunities to use computers. While ICT is used throughout the school, too little is used in history, geography and Spanish.
29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Staff know the pupils and their specific needs very well and provide appropriate support in most lessons. In English, for example, there were very good examples of work being matched to pupils' needs. This was particularly apparent in the Year 7 reading enrichment programme where pupils made good progress because staff were able to match both tasks and the level of the work to the needs of the pupils. Teaching staff were then able to intervene very effectively to ensure good progress. In a Year 10 maths lesson the classroom support assistant who was very proficient in the subject gave support to the whole class as well as the target group and made a significant contribution to the good progress made by both those pupils with special educational needs and the rest of the group. In a Year 11 maths lesson a pupil with visual and hearing impairment received very good, well focused, support and made very good progress as a result. Individual education plans for those pupils with special educational needs provide a very good general framework and indication of pupils' problems and good general targets. Good use is made of these plans in most subject areas although this is not consistent across the whole curriculum. Although many teachers plan quite specifically for the needs of special educational needs pupils, departments have not yet identified subject specific targets to ensure that they are always making the most effective contribution to the progress of all pupils with special educational needs.
30. Teaching effectively meets the needs of almost all of the school's pupils, whether they are from different ethnic backgrounds, are in the early stages of learning English or are higher or lower attainers. EMAG funds are used effectively to provide extra support for pupils with English as an additional language, enabling pupils to learn English language skills quickly so that they are able to participate fully in all subjects. Support is tailored to meet individual needs and, with the exception of some higher attainers in history, geography and physical education, is generally successful. Its effectiveness is enhanced by the fact that the school has established respect for pupils' different backgrounds, religions and cultures.

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

31. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered by this small school are generally good. The appropriate statutory curriculum is in place. The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum is good in the examination courses and is satisfactory overall. However, there is insufficient time for physical education to be taught to the depth required.
32. In Years 7 to 9 the National Curriculum requirements are generally met. The range of extra subjects offered is limited because ten per cent of the curriculum time is devoted to religious education. Extra time is provided throughout Years 7 to 9 to support low levels of literacy; this means, for example, that drama cannot be taught because of time constraints. Those pupils with very little English have additional support to raise their levels of attainment in English; they are withdrawn from the lower sets in science in Years 7 and 9 for support. This approach is having a positive effect – standards of literacy are improving and are having a beneficial effect on rising standards in other subjects.
33. The school is imaginative with its curriculum. In Years 10 and 11 several routes are offered through the examination courses. In keeping with the school's mission statement, the school is attempting to provide pupils with good examination results as a means of helping them overcome the low

attainment levels they started school with. All pupils follow an ICT course that is equivalent to two or four GCSEs, depending on choice. To manage this, time for science is reduced and all pupils in Year 10 are entered for a single science rather than the double preferred by many schools. The school has negotiated with a local college to ensure that pupils are not excluded from Advanced Level science courses on the grounds of having single science at GCSE. While this arrangement is good and provides pupils with the advantage of having an extra GCSE qualification, there are still difficulties for pupils needing double science qualifications for employment or courses elsewhere. Those who choose the four-subject option and those on the alternative curriculum are disappplied from taking a modern foreign language to GCSE. The first results at information and communication technology show a higher than expected degree of success. EAZ funds have been used imaginatively to provide staff to support alternative curriculum opportunities for disaffected pupils, to support development in ICT and to establish links with the University of Central Lancashire.

34. The school has created a single set of higher attaining pupils in each of Years 10 and 11. While this arrangement gives advantages in organising the curriculum, the disadvantage is that GCSE courses in geography and history run in alternate years. All pupils follow the same subjects, including Spanish and all are given close support by their tutors, aided by a wide range of counsellors.
35. The size of the school limits the flexibility of the timetable. An unexpected influx of pupils to Year 7 in September 2001 and loss of pupils in Year 8 led to some temporary timetable arrangements. Continuing increase in numbers is enabling the school to appoint extra staff from September 2002 and this will allow grouping within subjects based on performance in those subjects rather than criteria from other subjects. While teachers regularly review the constitution of sets it is not easy to move pupils between sets and bands.
36. While the overall effect of the literacy strategy has been good, there has been a varied response in subjects across the curriculum to the major initiative of in-service training focused upon the extension of the literacy strategy into all departments. There is much effective practice where departments have followed up in-service training, have integrated approaches to developing literacy skills into schemes of work and implemented key aspects of oracy, reading and writing. Staff in art, design and technology and history show a good awareness of the importance of literacy, which is used well in all three departments.
37. The school has worked well on its numeracy strategy and provision is good. The procedures for developing numeracy across the curriculum are good. For example, the geography department has worked with the mathematics department co-ordinating their approach to calculations. Science and mathematics staff work closely together to develop a common approach to teaching the required skills. There is a whole school policy and an action plan for its implementation. The mathematics department has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy into lessons in Years 7 to 9, which has produced a marked improvement in pupils' basic numeracy and thinking skills. The head of mathematics is working closely with departments to co-ordinate timing and styles of teaching topics and to identify learning opportunities in different subject areas. Departments now have written numeracy policies and learning opportunities are being developed and included into their schemes of work.
38. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good overall and is improving. Despite variations between subjects, there are many opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise their ICT skills in other subjects, which helps their progress. The majority of subject areas plan for the teaching of information and communication technology in schemes of work; provision is less well developed in geography, history and Spanish.
39. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good and EAZ funds are used creatively to support some staffing and other activity costs. The school offers sports, music, GCSE support groups, out of school computer clubs, residential activities, summer school for pupils entering Year 7 and university summer schools for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In addition, there is a high level of

informal support by teachers for pupils, with trips and games against other schools often arranged for out of school time.

40. The provision for the personal, social and health education (PSHE) of the pupils is good. The school is a pilot school for the Lancashire Healthy Schools Project which supports the national initiative to develop awareness of personal, social and health issues in schools. In Years 7 to 9 the programme is satisfactory overall and is delivered through three subjects. Pupils receive good guidance on all aspects of the development of the individual, including sex and relationships in religious education lessons; drugs education is delivered effectively with visiting speakers in Year 7 English lessons; and pupils learn more about dependency on drugs and alcohol in Year 9 science lessons. Clear information is sent to parents about the course; for example before the Year 7 module on drugs parents receive a leaflet and information about the lessons. Although the programme in Years 7 to 9 is taught effectively, it lacks general coordination and there is a need for improved use of registration periods to reinforce the main aspects of the PSHE programme.
41. The programme in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall. It forms part of the school's vocational programme, is well structured and taught to high standards by teachers and visiting speakers. Pupils receive very good preparation for the future, for example, careers, study skills, drugs awareness and financial awareness. All the lessons seen were good or very good. In one Year 10 lesson about personal finance, two visiting speakers gave a clear professional presentation to pupils about keeping a personal bank account. Pupils in Year 11 spoke very highly of the programme during the inspection, especially seven pupils with behavioural difficulties who, through an effective combination of work experience and school-based study, had made excellent progress in personal and social skills, with three having been offered employment and two having been received onto courses in further education. The provision for able pupils is satisfactory overall; these pupils have an intensive version of the course in registration periods but often miss the lessons delivered by visiting speakers and this aspect of the programme requires improvement. The coordinator of the programme is giving effective leadership on developing the citizenship aspect of PSHE in the school. There is a need for a whole school policy to clearly link all the components of the programme.
42. The overall provision of careers education in Years 10 and 11 is good. Provision is delivered as part of PSHE lessons for the majority of pupils and also in tutorials for one group of students in Year 10. A well-structured scheme of work has been developed covering all aspects of career education. In Year 10 students have the advantage of a two-week work experience programme. There is a good collection of information on careers in the school library and a dedicated computer program (KUDOS), has been installed on the school computer network to provide pupils with the opportunity of investigating a number of career options.
43. Links have been developed with local colleges of further education and these in turn provide support for the school by providing organised visits to the colleges, lunchtime clinics and application clinics based in school offering students an opportunity to make choices regarding further education and training. Visiting speakers have been invited into school to talk to the students in Years 10 and 11 and industry roadshows have been organised. The number of students who decide to continue their education in local colleges is below the national average but is growing. An increasing number are taking up opportunities for employment with training on schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships. This is a direct consequence of the quality of advice provided to the students by the teacher in charge of careers education and the support offered by the colleges and local employers. The school does not yet take enough advantage of the local colleges to broaden its vocational curriculum in Years 10 and 11 by giving pupils access to foundation courses available at the colleges which could lead on to higher vocational qualifications or to modern apprenticeships.
44. The school has developed an innovative programme of education for selected pupils in Years 10 and 11 for whom the mainstream education provision has little attraction. In Year 10 there are ten pupils and in Year 11 nine. The pupils are offered a specially designed programme of study that is intended to help improve attendance rates and develop improved levels of behaviour. The

programme consists of two days each week on work experience with local employers and three days in school studying English, mathematics, science, ICT, personal and social education, religious education and physical education. The pupils will be entered for basic skills qualifications. The programme is enjoying particular success in improving the pupils' attendance and developing better behaviour. Some pupils in Year 11 have been offered employment when they leave school which is a measure of the success of the programme. However, there is no accreditation of vocational work to improve pupils' opportunities to gain access to further education and training.

45. The provision for personal development of the pupils is very good. In particular the spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils is very good and their cultural development is good.
46. The school is managed according to the rites and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Its new mission statement recognises and respects the worth of every individual as a child of God. The school has a clear vision that the Church exists for everybody outside of it and that it provides a specifically Catholic education for all. The school is small; it welcomes a relatively high proportion of pupils of other faiths. It makes a point of making all pupils feel comfortable and valuing their individuality, religion and culture. This unique ethos presents pupils of different faiths and ethnic groups as good role models for all. The school successfully prepares its pupils for leadership, tolerance and respect in a multicultural society.
47. The school meets its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of corporate worship in its weekly mass, daily assemblies and tutor groups. The choir makes an important contribution to spirituality. Although there are opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness in English, art and music, other subjects of the curriculum miss the opportunity to do so.
48. Provision for moral development is very good. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and all other staff set very good examples of how to respect and care for each other and how to take responsibility. Similarly, the school's rules and procedures are based on expectations of reasonable behaviour, an understanding of right and wrong linked to the Catholic faith where suitable and respect for all faiths and cultures. Consequently, pupils learn from a wide range of good practice to take responsibility for their actions, to behave with consideration for others and to know the difference between right and wrong. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility through, for example, being librarians, peer counsellors, prefects, members of the school council and organising charity work. PSHE lessons face pupils very well with topical moral and social issues, for example, unwanted pregnancies. In English pupils read books such as "Two Weeks with the Queen" and give consideration to important issues such as terminal illness, family relationships and homosexuality. Pupils respond well to this and there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection.
49. Provision for social development is very good. Most lessons include group and whole class activities and pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils encourage good social development and many lessons provide opportunities for pupils to discuss issues and to learn how to listen to and tolerate alternative opinions in an atmosphere of safety and trust. This was evident in English group work seen during the inspection. Good work ethics are praised in design and technology and in ICT and good teamwork in physical education. Music plays a strong part in developing social skills and experiences of its pupils by offering a wide variety of opportunities to perform in public. The wide range of visits and trips, clubs and activities effectively promote social interaction.
50. Provision for cultural development is good. There are many opportunities in subjects to study and value contributions of different cultures. In art pupils study the work of artists from around the world, in geography pupils compare economic development in different countries and musical traditions and instruments from different countries are examined. Drama is developing and extra-curricular music plays an important part in widening pupils' cultural experience. In English pupils read poems and books like "Of Mice and Men" from other cultures. In PSHE pupils are faced with major issues related to the environment. There is an annual book week with visiting poets and poetry workshops. There is a theatre group for younger pupils with visits organised to Liverpool and

to the Octagon Theatre in Bolton. The art department works with the Harris Gallery in Preston. The choir enjoyed a one-day gospel-singing workshop. The very wide variety of experiences offered through the upper school curriculum, careers education and work experience, the alternative curriculum and support for higher attainers through the EAZ all give pupils experience of cultures other than their own to help them to raise their own aspirations. Assemblies frequently provide opportunities to compare and learn about religious and cultural values of the different ethnic groups in the school. The library is well used though it does not have a sufficiently wide range of resources reflecting the literature, art and traditions of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The arrangements for child protection and the provision for pupils' welfare and safety are very good and enable pupils to learn in a caring and secure environment.
52. The child protection programme is very effective, primarily due to the very strong leadership, management, professionalism, commitment and caring work of the designated teacher. She is fully supported by the headteacher and governors. Together they ensure that all aspects of the school policy and local authority guidelines are met and equal consideration is given to Catholic values and teachings. Training for staff at all levels, including for new teachers and support staff is excellent. All staff are aware of their responsibilities and value the work of the designated teacher and give good support. Constructive and purposeful links are maintained with external support agencies and professional staff such as the educational welfare officer.
53. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Teachers, particularly heads of school and the deputy headteacher have very clear and detailed understanding of pupils' pastoral and academic needs, including a good understanding of the needs of those pupils from different class, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Teachers, support staff, the chaplain, the educational welfare officer, community youth worker and learning mentors use this information effectively to ensure pupils' personal, emotional and social development and needs are fully met. Pupils' concerns are addressed and their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated in assemblies and through informal and formal contact time with the senior management team, heads of school and the pastoral coordinator.
54. There are number of other initiatives, for example the peer support training programme, which encourage pupils to help each other, have a greater understanding of themselves and create a warm, trusting and friendly environment for learning. This prepares pupils for life as responsible citizens and raises their confidence and self-esteem.
55. There are effective procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance and the information is used to investigate and raise existing levels of attendance. A significant improvement has been made. However, attendance remains well below the national average, because of the lack of support from some parents and pupils. While the school has strived to develop links with families and there has been a significant impact on attendance, contacts with some other families have not been firmly established, particularly those who take extended family holidays during term time. Where the school's curriculum has been developed to meet the needs of pupils who have low educational aspirations, attendance has started to improve.
56. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effectively implemented. Staff make very good use of rewards and celebrate pupils' achievements both inside and outside of the classroom. Most pupils respond positively and have a very clear understanding of right and wrong.
57. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very effective. All reported concerns about bullying are thoroughly investigated and recorded and information about most incidents is shared with parents. Much of the new legislation to promote and include all pupils is being implemented and the school is aware that all allegations of racism should be reported in the next governors' annual reports to parents. The school is in the process of setting up an internal exclusion unit to enable it to build on its existing good practice and further discourage anti-social behaviour.

58. Whole school procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory overall and are currently being reviewed. Key members of staff have attended appropriate courses to familiarise themselves with systems of assessment, to discover what data is available and to gain the expertise to use that data. These members of staff are now in the process of developing systems of assessment across the school. At present, there is a variety in the way in which assessment is undertaken between departments, with a range of degrees of success. Systems of assessment are very good in mathematics and English and they are mostly satisfactory in other subjects. The planned further dissemination of good practice in analysis and use of the vast amount of assessment information is intended to improve the overall quality of assessment procedures.
59. Procedures for monitoring pupils' performance are satisfactory overall. The school uses a wide range of tests and subject assessments to give a wide picture of how well pupils are attaining in each subject. Information is detailed in science, mathematics and English and teachers are working hard to improve their systems in other subjects and to improve their own knowledge of how the information can be used. The results of end of Year 6 National Curriculum tests and tests taken early in Year 7 are used effectively to group pupils according to their prior attainment in Years 7 to 9. There is flexibility for pupils to move between groups, though it is easier for this to happen in some subjects than others. Whole year subject targets are set and pupils are given individual targets in Years 7 to 9. Target setting works effectively in English, mathematics and science; it is less effective elsewhere.
60. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment information. It analyses its examination and test results and uses the information to set targets, particularly for GCSE. However, some staff find understanding the information difficult and misinterpret differences between subjects. A wide range of assessment information is used to advise pupils' option choices for Year 10. While assessment information is used effectively in Years 10 and 11 to set targets for pupils, it is not used well enough in Years 7 to 9. Target grades are often set higher than predicted grades, in order to raise pupils' expectations and levels of achievement. Pupils failing to meet targets are closely mentored until they start to improve. Pupils with English as an additional language are monitored closely to ensure that their language needs are fully addressed. This scheme of monitoring and mentoring is already revealing evidence of rising standards of achievement.
61. Linked closely to assessment procedures and target setting, is an incentive scheme through which a range of rewards are offered to encourage pupils to attend school regularly, to behave well and to make consistent progress. Those who achieve all targets are eligible for a gold award, those who fail one target are eligible for a silver award and those who display significant improvement in two or more targets are eligible for a bronze award. Pupils gaining these awards are then included in a draw for the winners at each level to receive a financial reward. Pupils value this system of positive recognition for endeavour.
62. There is a whole school policy for marking and assessment, which is understood by pupils and parents and which is used effectively across all departments.
63. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Statements are thoroughly reviewed and appropriate targets are set. Procedures for identifying pupils are in place and are very thorough. Links between all subjects and the special educational needs department are making a significant contribution to raising the level of understanding of all staff regarding the special needs of all pupils and the variety of teaching styles and alternative procedures available to encourage appropriate progress. Liaison with primary schools is good and forms the foundation for initial assessment which is then developed through extensive testing of pupils on entry and in subsequent years. This provides relevant information to assist the school in making decisions about the level of support necessary for all pupils. Communication with parents is very good and they are actively encouraged to become involved in their children's education. There is also a special parents' evening each year for parents of those pupils with special educational needs. A 'special' news letter is also regularly sent to these parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. Most parents have very positive views about the school. In their opinion the school is well led and managed. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with concerns and acknowledge the welcome they receive at formal and informal events. They believe teaching is good. Pupils like coming to school, are making good progress and the school is helping their child to become a mature and responsible member of the school and wider community. Inspection evidence and the inspection team support these very constructive views.
65. The school has effective relationships with parents and the levels of communication between them and the school are good. Effective procedures are in place to welcome new pupils and their parents to the school and this pleases both parents and pupils. Regular newsletters are sent by the school to inform parents of events in school and parents play an active role in ensuring their child observes the school code of conduct. Parents are encouraged to speak with heads of school, who are perceived by most parents as approachable teachers and managers. The governors' report and the school prospectus are both written in user-friendly language; both comply with statutory requirements. In addition, parents from the minority ethnic community have access to bilingual teaching staff and pupils who ensure that these parents have equal access to all information and staff.
66. Parents receive the annual pupil's report and three interim reports which include all the required information including targets for improvement and enable parents to help their children to improve. Parents of children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are kept fully informed about their children's support and progress. Most parents of pupils with special educational needs attend annual reviews and parents' evenings are also well attended. These arrangements have a positive impact on learning and the relationships between parents and the school.
67. Most parents, staff and governors enjoy a purposeful and constructive relationship with each other and this has a positive impact on the work of the school. These parents give support and guidance for their child's education and this supports learning in school and in the home. Parents are encouraged to get involved in school and several help by listening to readers and by supporting sports and drama events both inside and outside of the school. Parents and governors work diligently for the school. For example, they attend mass which effectively supports pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
68. Most parents comply with the home school agreement and ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time. They support the school's discipline policy and ensure their child completes homework. Parents provide support in the home by providing computers and ensuring their child is actively involved in extra curricular and residential activities. However, a small minority of parents neglect their responsibilities. These parents condone absences consequently affecting the school's overall attendance and subsequently their child's achievements and personal development.
69. Since the last report the school continues to provide good quality information and sustain the good relationships evident in the last report.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

70. The school is well led and managed and the direction for the improvement of the school provided by the headteacher is very good. The level of collaboration among staff is very good and there is considerable support for the school's planned improvements. Responsibilities are suitably delegated, not always easy in a small school and are generally carried out effectively. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely together and share the major responsibilities. Between them they provide the framework for development and manage the staff of the school very well. They have established a very good ethos for improvement in the school, encompassing staff,

pupils, parents, local authority, Catholic diocese and support agencies. Staff levels are due to increase in September 2002 and this will ease the workload on the headteacher and deputy head.

71. The school has a high level of awareness of what areas it needs to work on to improve further. It is conscious of a responsibility to boost the self-esteem of its pupils and to help them make good progress from a start of generally low standards on entry to the school. Planning for improvement and the priorities the school has identified, are very well suited and sensitive to pupils' needs. School and departmental development planning are closely linked, priorities are shared and timescales, costings and criteria for identifying success are clearly stated. The actions to meet the school's priorities for development are very well planned and reflect the school's Christian ethos. In all planning, the varied backgrounds and capabilities of pupils feature strongly.
72. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are satisfactory overall and at senior management level are very good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher in particular have a very sharp awareness of where there are development needs and although there is some variability in the level of awareness at departmental level, performance management and staff development are linked to managing improvements in teaching. There has been considerable success in improving teaching since the last inspection. However, the variation in quality of teaching within some subjects indicates that not enough is done at departmental level to identify and share the good practice that exists in considerable quantity in the school.
73. Governors are very well informed about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Many of them visit the school regularly, meet with pupils and staff and have a very good grasp of the learning difficulties many of the pupils have. Their links with the local community are diverse and they bring their experiences into the school, adding a knowledgeable dimension to the factors the school considers in its development planning. They work closely with the school to plan its improvement, support the headteacher and contribute to the school's evaluation of its own performance. They meet all of their statutory obligations.
74. In terms of planning improvements to raise standards, managing the implementation of the literacy strategy has been significant, involving a major commitment of time and effort. All staff have been supported in their training and departments have received additional training as they take a major responsibility in implementing the literacy strategy. Parents, governors and assistant teachers (all of whom were trained) work as 'better reading partners'. Coordination of the work of departments is skilful and although the pace of development has varied between subjects, the initiative is leading to rising standards, as planned.
75. The introduction of ICT as a major curriculum area, offering two or four GCSE equivalent accreditation, has been an important development. The change has been managed well. Management of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory and much has been done to ensure ICT is taught in all subjects. The school's plans to make sure that the range of opportunities for pupils to experience ICT are good but, as yet, there is insufficient monitoring of what is taught to ensure that pupils' experience is coherently organised. Nevertheless, there has been improvement since the previous inspection in fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum.
76. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special needs and the management of special educational needs is very good. There is a clear policy, a good range of information for staff and effective deployment of support staff. The special educational needs co-ordinator is an excellent advocate in the school for special needs and he is well supported by both learning support co-ordinators and by the senior classroom support assistant. Classroom support assistants are a real strength of special educational needs in the school and are a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils. Special educational needs features prominently in the school development plan. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is very well informed and extremely supportive. Although many aspects of support from the local education authority are good and the present educational psychologist provides very valuable support, lack of continuity of an attached educational psychologist is having a detrimental effect on the progress of a minority of pupils as the statementing process is being seriously delayed. Accommodation in the department is inadequate but will improve considerably with the imminent completion of a new inclusion unit.

77. The provision of staff to match the curriculum is good. There is a good balance of experienced staff and younger teachers. There is a balanced representation of men and women in middle and senior management positions, providing good role models to pupils. There is a good match of teachers' qualifications with the subjects they teach and there is no split teaching of classes. This provides good quality and continuity to pupils' learning.
78. The school provides good support for the training and development of all staff, for both individual, professional development and to meet curriculum needs. There are very good induction procedures for new teachers and for student teachers training in the school. This includes training in child protection procedures. The school has an effective professional development plan which is based upon regular interviews and observation of lessons.
79. The number and quality of staff supporting the teaching of students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language are very good. Members of the classroom support staff are placed in subject areas in which they have good knowledge and understanding. Consequently, they make a very good and positive contribution to the work of the school.
80. The amount of technician support is unsatisfactory in some areas. It is good in information and communication technology and mathematics, but deemed insufficient for the design and technology subjects, especially food technology in which there is no support. In science insufficient technician support has restricted implementation of departmental reorganisation of resources.
81. Overall accommodation is good, enabling the teaching and learning to be effective. Inspection evidence indicates that classrooms are appropriate for the size of class and ensure effective learning and teaching in mathematics, geography, information and communication technology, design and technology, art and music. Satisfactory learning and teaching were evident in other subjects, including English, science and history. The accommodation for physical education is also adequate and incorporates a large gym with adequate changing rooms. The library is adequate and generally meets the needs of the school community. The outdoor accommodation is spacious and the school has use of the local authority tennis courts and fields. Decorative order around the school is variable and displays around the school are used to create a stimulating environment conducive to learning. There is good storage space accessible to teaching and non-teaching staff. The hall is well adapted and effectively used for assemblies. The school also has a designated medical room and chapel which effectively serves the school community. There are two dining areas, which are adequate and complement the Year 11 common room, which is used by many older pupils for eating and socialising. This provision supports all aspects of learning. The conscientious site supervisor and other staff keep the whole school clean, warm and well cared for. However, the playground is often littered and spoils the otherwise well maintained lawns and gardens. The building is not suitably adapted for wheelchair users. One disabled pupil does not have wheelchair access to the second floor and misses opportunities to study with her peers in some lessons. The pupil community has increased and recent projections indicate an additional increase of about 50 pupils per year for the next four years. The school has planned for this increase.
82. The provision of resources in most areas is at least satisfactory with some areas being good. Weaknesses still occur in geography and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9 and the science department needs to use a greater variety to support a greater variety of teaching styles. The system of bidding for the allocation of funding for resources has enabled staff to clearly identify their developmental needs and the school has safeguards for staff not familiar with this process. There has been significant investment in ICT equipment and this has allowed increased access to computers which is helping to improve pupils' skills. Teachers make very good use of the available technology particularly interactive white boards when introducing and demonstrating new learning.
83. The school manages its finances and resources very well. Financial decisions are based on very clear, accurate information provided by the bursar. The last annual auditors' report praised the very good quality of financial administration. The school is one of very few in the local authority invited

to co-operate with a private contractor to help draw up an audit schedule that can be put out to tender.

84. The headteacher is successful in raising substantial sums from outside agencies for the benefit of his pupils. Consequently the school spends more per pupil than most other schools. Planning is sharply focused and grants and funds are used very effectively for specific purposes. EAZ funds, for example, are used effectively to aid pupils' learning and are having a positive effect on standards. The money delegated to support pupils with special educational needs is focused on their needs and is well spent. The school's financial planning supports the educational priorities of the school very well. A significant benefit of the above average funds available is that teachers spend less time in front of smaller classes than in many schools. This leads to the very good personal development of the pupils and places the school in a strong position to make more rigorous demands on pupils to raise standards across the school. The school is effective and gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

85. The school now needs to:

i. Raise standards by:

- providing opportunities for independent learning;
- ensuring the literacy strategy is fully implemented;
- sharing the effective teaching practice seen in many lessons;
- improving the expectations for pupils in geography, history and physical education; and
- ensuring ICT is fully used in all subjects.

(paragraphs: 5, 6, 8, 10, 22, 23, 28, 72, 75, 113, 181)

ii. Improve attendance by working with:

- the small number of families who do not ensure their children attend school regularly; and
- families who take extended holidays during school terms.

(paragraphs: 7, 19, 55)

iii. Improve the curriculum by:

- expanding vocational education to include links with colleges;
- accrediting vocational work to improve pupils' opportunities to gain access to further education and training;
- taking advantage of increasing numbers of pupils in the school to provide flexibility in grouping pupils according to their prior attainment in more subjects; and
- providing enough time for physical education.

(paragraphs: 31, 35, 43, 44, 182)

iv. Develop the use of assessment information in order to:

- improve teachers' understanding of how the school's results compare with national and similar school averages; and
- set targets for pupils.

(paragraphs: 60, 123, 143, 151)

86. The school should also consider the following minor issues:

- Work with the local education authority to maintain the pace of statementing of pupils with special educational needs.

(paragraph: 76)

- Explore ways to provide access to upper floors of the school for pupils with physical disabilities.

(paragraph: 81)

Special educational needs assessment

87. Assessment procedures are very good and are clearly identified in the school special educational needs policy and are very detailed. They provide excellent information for staff and are generally well known by staff and applied appropriately. There is an effective, highly structured monitoring process for all pupils in Year 7 which uses information from the primary school, National Curriculum test results, a range of standardised tests and consultation with teachers and parents. The learning support co-ordinator manages subsequent action well, taking lead responsibility for provision and for ensuring that an appropriate individual education plan is produced. Further monitoring is thorough and decisions are made on whether the pupil needs support from specialists outside the school and, in consultation with the local education authority, the decision is made on whether the pupil requires a statement of special educational needs. If this is the case the statement is reviewed annually and parents are fully involved together with relevant staff from the local education authority and the school. The review process for all pupils with special educational needs is regular and comprehensive and based on the progress identified in their individual education plan; parents are encouraged to attend review meetings. The school is adapting very specific target setting tasks for literacy and numeracy which will be included in individual education plans to establish exactly what progress has been made in these areas by individual pupils so that very precise targets for improvement can be set.

The provision for and standards achieved by pupils with English as an additional language

88. There are 170 pupils with English as an additional language. There are many pupils with Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi as home languages and a small number with Arabic and Malay as their first spoken language. Most pupils are from second-generation families with a very small number of recent arrivals. The school is funded through the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant to give extra help where it is needed. Provision is good.
89. The standards of the majority are in line with other pupils of the ages of 14 within the school in English, mathematics and science. The slight variations among the different languages and the genders are not significantly different, with the standards achieved by most of these pupils being below national expectations, as they are for the other pupils. They make good progress, as is demonstrated in the detailed tracking of attainment that the school undertakes throughout their school life. The pupils who have recently arrived and have no or very low levels of English language are taught both in class and in small groups. The quality of support is good and well matched to pupils' learning in English and other subjects. In the early stages, pupils have one-to-one tuition until they reach the levels of coping with ordinary lessons with classroom assistance. Both of these approaches are effective. For example, where two boys were withdrawn from a class for early English language learning of 'how I come to school' and months of the year, the support provided by specialist teachers is specific to their needs, providing vocabulary, explanation and details of English language structure where necessary. In most lessons, pupils with English as an additional language are totally integrated, as in a Year 7 art class where classroom assistants helped with words such as 'expression' and in a Year 8 class in a history lesson on slavery. In a Year 11 registration period, pupils were included in the discussion and asked their opinions.
90. The management of this aspect of the school's work is good. Pupils are well known to staff; strategies are understood and used effectively, their progress is evaluated and recorded and planning for future teaching is based on these records. The school responds well to the demands made by pupils who enter after the start of the school year. By the end of their school careers most pupils are well able to cope with learning and conversation confidently.
91. The school gives good value for money in respect of the grants received. The many staff and assistants are well deployed and highly committed. Pupils are integrated into the whole school ethos of care and respect for the individual.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	109
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	28	45	29	0	0	0
Percentage	6	27	41	27	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	423
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	149

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	162

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	171

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
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	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1

National comparative data	8.1
---------------------------	-----

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 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	41	28	69

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	20	24	21
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	36	40	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (47)	58 (55)	54 (41)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (22)	28 (23)	23 (15)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	22	23	22
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	38	39	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	55 (47)	56 (47)	54 (38)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (26)	29 (25)	14 (15)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	37	40	77

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	9	34	36
	Girls	10	31	39
	Total	19	65	75
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	25 (24)	84 (90)	97 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	30.3 (30.4)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	22
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	0
Indian	107
Pakistani	50
Bangladeshi	10
Chinese	0
White	224
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	57

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
---	----

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.3
Key Stage 4	14.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	1,519,807
Total expenditure	1,461,490
Expenditure per pupil	3,471
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,153
Balance carried forward to next year	82,470

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	423
Number of questionnaires returned	250

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	40	7	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	50	43	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	38	2	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	42	9	4	1
The teaching is good.	61	32	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	32	3	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	28	4	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	21	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	58	34	4	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	67	28	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	33	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	38	3	2	8

Other issues raised by parents

Overall, the response of parents to the work of the school is very positive. They are pleased with the level of care and concern that the school shows for their children and very impressed with how quickly the school deals with issues. They consider that teachers work hard and give up a considerable amount of their own time and that the senior management treats parents with sensitivity and concern when they have any worries. They are complimentary about the way that the school deals with racist issues and has established a community in which the religions, backgrounds and cultures of individual pupils are treated with equal respect.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Pupils' good attitudes and commitment, as a consequence of very good teaching.
- Management and leadership which are very good.
- The good progress made by pupils taking into account very low levels of literacy on entry to the school.

Areas for improvement

- Results in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.
- The quality of written work.

92. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below the national average. Boys' performance was markedly better than in 2000 and girls' was worse. Results were above average when compared with those in similar schools. There has been no clear trend over recent years with results fluctuating unpredictably. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, results in 2001 for both English language and literature were below the national average. Boys did particularly badly in language but somewhat better, comparatively, in literature. Girls performed better than boys in both subjects. Results were in line with the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils in the school achieving grades A*-C in English was higher than in mathematics and lower than in science. The performance of pupils with English as an additional language was not significantly different to the performance of other pupils.
93. In work seen, the overall standard of attainment of pupils at the age of 14 is below that found nationally. Pupils listen attentively in pairs and small groups. The standard of speaking is above average. Pupils answer questions willingly and clearly. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils use standard English. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8, for example, talked fluently and articulately about Shelley's use of metaphor in his poem *Ozymandias*. Average attaining pupils in the same year recalled accurately characters in their set novel and communicated effectively. They also listened respectfully to offerings of classmates without interruption. The reading aloud of some lower attaining pupils in Year 7 lacks fluency and variation in pitch and pace. Attainment in reading in Years 7 to 9 is broadly in line with expectation. The overall level of reading comprehension allows the great majority of pupils to enjoy a wide range of fiction and non-fiction. A significant minority of pupils, however, join the school with reading ages at least two years below their actual age. Such pupils receive intensive support from specialist staff and make good progress. The reading enrichment classes in the library are a very successful initiative to promote reading in Year 7. Paired reading with older pupils also helps to improve standards. A wide selection of attractive reading books, chosen to match the varied reading ability of pupils, provides popular opportunities to extend pupils' reading. All teaching rooms have class libraries and these contain books specifically targeted to encourage boys to read more. High attaining pupils in Year 7 compared their two class reading books with sound arguments based upon their close study of the novels.
94. The overall standard of writing of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is below that found nationally. Those who enter the school with levels below grade 4 in national tests join 'progress units' in which they receive specialist assistance and support. This group make good progress throughout Year 7. Amongst other pupils in Year 7 there is very wide variation in levels of attainment and in lower sets a significant percentage are working close to Level 4. The presentation of their work is untidy and handwriting is poorly formed. Written work of the majority of pupils shows clear improvement by

the end of Year 7, as they produce more substantial pieces, with growing control of structure and expression. Even in higher sets, however, written work is the weakest part of literacy skills and, by the age of 14, a significant number of pupils still make frequent errors with sentence structure, expression of ideas and details of punctuation and spelling. By the end of Year 9 written work of higher attaining pupils is lively, imaginative and, in the main, accurate. Their best writing is in personal reflective and autobiographical pieces. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The above average percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language spans a wide range of levels of attainment. The great majority make good progress and are very well represented in higher sets. Taking into account very low standards of attainment on entry, by the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress.

95. At the age of 16, the general standard of pupils' attainment is below that found nationally. The quality of listening and speaking is above average. Pupils are attentive and respond willingly and fluently to questions. They work well together in pairs and small groups. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 discussed Hardy's *The Withered Arm* in detail and gained from sharing ideas. In drama, pupils collaborated effectively to produce good presentations. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, for example, developed lively, extended improved dialogue in various role-play situations. As part of their study of *Hobson's Choice*, lower attaining pupils in Year 10 gave lively and accurate answers which showed thorough knowledge of the text. The general standard of written work in Years 10 and 11 is below average. Average and lower attaining pupils make many errors with sentence building and details of punctuation, spelling and choice of vocabulary. Although they are familiar with the drafting process, many pupils do not read their first pieces thoroughly enough. They fail to think out precisely what they want to write before putting pen to paper. By the end of Year 11 high attaining pupils produce a wide range of carefully presented and skilfully crafted writing based upon the study of literature, as well as good examples of persuasive and narrative assignments. Good use is made of word processing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in developing written work from a lower starting point. By the end of Year 11, when considering very low standards of literacy on entry and performance in national tests at the age of 14, pupils make good progress. Pupils from ethnic minorities and those with English as an additional language also make good progress.
96. Throughout the school pupils are well motivated, eager to learn and have a positive attitude to the subject. Relationships are mutually respectful. The great majority of pupils sustain concentration well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a direct result of the sensitivity and skill with which they are taught. In group work pupils are careful to respect the views and opinions of others. Particularly good examples are seen in drama classes. Pupils willingly give way when others are speaking. The overall good standard of behaviour springs from pupils' positive response to very good teaching.
97. Teaching is very good overall with some being outstanding. Teachers have a very thorough knowledge and understanding of their subject. They plan and prepare lessons very thoroughly and use a wide range of teaching methods. Very effective use is being made of an interactive whiteboard in one teaching room. Teachers use a rich mixture of language activities to maintain pupils' interest. In many lessons relaxed, good-humoured relationships lead directly to pupils having confidence in their answers and enjoying their learning. Rigorous questioning and the brisk pace of lessons ensure that pupils sustain concentration well and remain on task. Teachers keep very thorough records of pupils' achievements and track their progress carefully. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for examinations and last minute revision for the GCSE, for example, is thorough and helpful. Marking of pupils' work is conscientious and consistent with much constructive and helpful comment. Pupils with special educational needs are taught with great sensitivity. Such is the commitment of staff that lunchtime, weekend and holiday classes are held.
98. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Drama provides a popular option in Years 10 and 11 and results in 2001 were above the national average. No drama is taught in Years 7 to 9, however and this means that no pupils experience teaching in the subject up to the age of 14. Planning, organisation and administration in English are very efficient. The literacy strategy has been

effectively implemented in Year 7. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and evaluated. The department is managed with great skill and energy. Leadership of the subject is very good.

99. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is generally good, with a whole school policy now well established in most subjects, though it is in its early stages in geography. Key terminology is displayed in all departments and common approaches to writing are used. As a result pupils' literacy skills are improving and this is helping their performance in most subjects.
100. Performance in national tests and GCSE examinations is broadly the same as at the time of the last inspection. With standards on entry still being well below average, pupils continue to make good progress by the age of 16. The quality of teaching has improved and this has had an important influence upon pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. Their attitudes are more positive than previously. Management and leadership are now even stronger.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Very good leadership and management of the department providing clear direction and action plans for improvement.
- Very good assessment procedures support learning.
- Very good provision for all pupils with different educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching time for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Opportunities for transfer of pupils between sets in Years 10 and 11.

101. In Year 7, pupils enter the school with attainment which is well below national average. In the Year 9, 2001 National Curriculum tests, pupils' attainment was below the national average. Standards were well above average when compared with pupils from similar schools. This represented very good achievement by pupils. Results in mathematics were above those in English and similar to those in science. Over the last three years, there has been a rising trend in attainment, marginally greater than the improvement nationally. This improvement is the result of a combination of factors including good teaching, very good assessment and target setting and the adoption of the National Numeracy Initiative (NNI). At the end of Year 11, in 2001, results at GCSE were below the national average but average compared with similar schools. This represented good achievement by pupils. The increase in those attaining the higher GCSE grades was a significant feature of the 2001 results. There has been no significant pattern in the difference in attainment of girls and boys. Reflecting the integrated nature of the school, the clear analysis of results by ethnicity indicates that there was no difference in achievement for different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs.
102. Overall, the standard of work seen in all years is below that expected nationally. However, learning is very good and progress over time is good. Year 7 pupils have benefited significantly from the introduction of the National Numeracy Initiative (NNI) and demonstrate a variety of calculating methods. The most capable pupils, in this year, can use probability, calculate angles and solve simple equations. During a lesson on algebra, which was linked to their work in science, pupils gained a clear understanding of the nature of formulae and substitution. Least capable pupils apply their basic number skills to simple graphs, areas of rectangles and the number patterns. By Year 9, most capable pupils work successfully at the highest levels of attainment, working with Pythagoras' theorem, areas of sectors, volumes of compound solids and sketching curved graphs. However many of the most advanced topics have to be taught outside of normal curriculum time. In a Year 9 lesson, high attaining pupils showed very good mental skills as they tackled multiple

stage questions, whilst lower attaining pupils made good progress in using approximations to speed up their addition of large figures. By the end of Year 11, the most capable pupils are working at very high levels of attainment, using rules of indices and applying Pythagoras' theorem in three dimensions. During a revision lesson, pupils showed very good understanding of basic trigonometry; however, their number work was better than their basic algebraic skills. The majority of pupils who are entered for the intermediate level of examination, work successfully studying volumes of solids, bearings, factorising quadratics and identifying straight line equations. Pupils showed good understanding of methods of combining probabilities as they practised questions from past papers. Some of the pupils investigated a range of questions using computers.

103. Those with special education needs are represented in all classes within the school and are well supported by teachers and by skilled classroom assistants, who help others in addition to the targeted pupils. Good support was seen for pupils with English as their second language during a listening test, with the teacher and the classroom support assistant giving one-to-one assistance to interpret the spoken instructions from the taped test. There is very good differentiation in the work provided, especially the provision of extension work, which challenges all capability groups. All pupils are expected to achieve a GCSE grade and for those pupils for whom this is unsuitable, the school provides entry to the certificate of achievement. Those pupils identified as talented in mathematics respond well to the challenge in lessons and attend extra classes to cover more advanced topics. They are encouraged to participate in mathematics competitions and recently Year 7 pupils have won the local schools' mathematics competition.
104. Overall, teaching is very good. In lessons observed, teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which is utilised to provide insightful, well planned lessons. This was observed in a Year 10 lesson on bearings, in which the teacher used the interactive whiteboard to maximise pupils' understanding of the topic. This led to excellent progress being made by pupils during the lesson. Although this was a revision week which narrowed the teaching styles used by teachers, there was a wide range of learning opportunities offered to support pupils' learning. Very good use is made of warm-up activities, question and answer, teacher exposition, use of computers and some paired work. The high expectations of pupils to perform well are appreciated by pupils and they respond well to opportunities provided. During a mental test, at the beginning of a Year 7 lesson, pupils were challenged to substitute either the easy or harder values into an algebraic expression. Many pupils were eager to produce both solutions. Pace and challenge are significant features of the most successful lessons and pupils respond well to these, especially in Years 10 and 11. A Year 10 class, studying Pythagoras' theorem, moved rapidly from the basic triangle to applying the rule to real life problems and the subsequent homework extended its use into three dimensions. Teaching is least successful when pupils are given insufficient time for their own work or when questioning techniques do not identify pupils who do not understand.
105. Management and leadership of the department are very good. There is a clear vision of where improvements are required and a plan of actions is in place to achieve these. The very good data analysis has identified areas for development and the assessment of pupils' performance gives a very good basis for individual target setting. Resources are very good and very well managed, enabling good progress for all pupils. Accommodation is good in the size and number of rooms and provides a stimulating learning environment. All specialist teachers have their own rooms, giving the department a good sense of identity in which pupils expect to learn well. Staffing is good and plans to appoint a further specialist will maintain this provision as the number of pupils increases. Whilst curriculum provision is satisfactory, there is insufficient time allocated to Years 7 to 9 for mathematics. The time constraint limits the amount of background enrichment which teachers can bring to the lessons. It has been minuted that teachers are finding it difficult to cover all requirements of the new national framework for Years 7 to 9. Extra-curricular lessons are arranged to cover topics for the highest attaining pupils. The setting arrangements in Years 10 and 11 make transfer of pupils between certain groups difficult.
106. The school's numeracy strategy is effective and pupils are acquiring sound numeracy skills. The mathematics department provides considerable support, where needed, to colleagues teaching

other subjects, to identify and plan the teaching of numeracy skills. Consequently, pupils' numeracy skills are improving.

107. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards of attainment have improved steadily over recent years. The assessment system provides clarity and opportunities for target setting. The quality of teaching has been developed to a very high standard. Resources, especially provision of ICT, have improved. The department supports, very well, the learning of pupils of all abilities and with different educational needs. There is an improving participation by pupils in their own learning.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are rising.
- The relationships between pupils and staff and pupils' attitudes to work.

Areas for development

- Organising work in Years 7 to 9 to ensure the continuity and progression of scientific principles.
- Marking.
- Independent learning skills and opportunities for investigative experiments.
- The range of teaching styles.

108. The attainment of pupils in the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001 was well below average. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and Level 6 or above was below the national average. When these results are compared to similar schools they are well above average. The attainment level over the last three years has risen steadily at a rate similar to that seen nationally. Pupils have very low literacy levels on entry to the school and so their progress through Years 7 to 9 is good.

109. The attainment of pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was below average in the percentage obtaining grades A*-C but very well above average in the percentage obtaining grades A*-G. Results have risen steadily over the past three years. The proportion of girls and boys achieving higher results varies from year to year and so is not significant. When compared to similar schools these results are well above average and are higher than those predicted by their results at aged 14 and so pupils made good progress in Years 10 and 11. Ethnic minority pupils and those with English as an additional language also make good progress.

110. Evidence from the inspection shows that by the time pupils are 14, attainment is below average, that is slightly above the end of Year 9 national tests. This can be explained by a weaker ability in answering the examination questions and remembering the information over a longer period of time. Pupils are confident in handling apparatus and can use the correct technical terminology when talking about the subject although at times they lack precision. Pupils are able to make predictions in a variety of practical situations but do not always do so; often they just follow the practical instructions and then interpret the results. The literacy skills of pupils vary greatly and the amount of extended writing is limited, with most responses being in the form of short sentence answers. The higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of acids and alkalis, using this and their general understanding of chemistry to explain reversible and irreversible reactions. Middle and lower attaining pupils have a basic understanding of scientific principles and struggle with answers requiring the accurate use of scientific terminology. They also have more uncompleted work in their books. Mathematical skills are used in a variety of situations but weak mathematical skills hinder the work of the lower attaining pupils; this was seen in a lesson when a number struggled in measuring results at timed intervals and constructing a graph from the results. By the age of 14 pupils are competent in handling apparatus and apply safety procedures appropriately. Pupils of all capabilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts and their understanding of scientific concepts. Their progress is good.

111. Comments regarding practical apparatus handling, literacy, numeracy and scientific predictions also apply to pupils in Years 10 and 11. By the age of 16 pupils are working at levels below the national average. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 are able to explain the results of an experiment and link the results to their theoretical understanding. Lower attaining pupils make good progress in their understanding and a group revising reactivity series knew the reactions of some chemicals but also had gaps in their knowledge, such as chemical symbols. When answering examination type questions lower attaining pupils often struggle in understanding what the question requires but show a greater understanding once given guidance. They also often use general comments rather than precise scientific answers. Pupils are able to write an experimental plan and can implement that plan, using the concept of a 'fair' experiment. They show varying skills in interpreting information they collect in experiments.
112. In all years pupils with special educational needs receive support relevant to their need and pupils with English as an additional language receive individual or group support as appropriate and thus all groups of pupils progress at a similar rate. ICT provision is continuing to improve, pupils make use of the Internet in most years and areas, such as data logging, are included. The newly wired room will provide even more opportunities for this.
113. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with almost a third of the lessons being good; there is no unsatisfactory teaching. There is no significant difference in the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Strengths within teaching are the very good teacher-pupil relationships and the management of the pupils; these enable learning to take place in a purposeful environment. All pupils are respected and this was seen in a lesson when a pupil new to the country taught the class a relevant word from his own language, significantly improving his self-esteem. Most lessons, in all years, are taught as whole class lessons, with a heavy dependence on worksheets and little small group work. This means that the learning support assistants are not fully used and there is not sufficient material to extend the relatively higher-attaining pupils in each class. At times vague instructions mean that pupils struggle with the conceptual ideas being considered. Opportunities are also often missed to develop predictive and planning skills by including the pupils in a wider range of experimental work rather than formal investigation; this inhibits development of independent learning skills.
114. The system of having a new exercise book for each unit is developing a culture whereby pupils consider each unit in isolation and, as the majority do not keep their old books for reference purposes, they lose a valuable revision resource. Pupils' books are marked using the school marking system often with a short comment. However work is sometimes left unmarked, especially if pupils have moved on to the next unit and unfinished work is not always followed up. Comments do not clearly indicate how good the pupils' performance is and what is needed to raise their levels of attainment. There is good use of regular tests and the results of these are related to the National Curriculum levels, but pupils do not keep an individual record of these. Assessment data is not used by the staff when teaching the following unit of work. The use of homework is inconsistent in that different classes are given different amounts of homework and the work does not always follow on from and develop the work of the lesson. During the inspection homework was not set in any lessons seen. The behaviour of pupils is good and their attitudes to science are very good and in all lessons seen the pupils were self-motivated and worked with a high level of concentration. When given the opportunity pupils work well in groups. Their behaviour and attitude make a positive contribution to pupils' good progress within lessons.
115. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum, although currently not all classes have the same amount of time. The rotation system, used to cover the units, does enable staff to develop expertise in different areas but as each unit is taught independently there is a loss of continuity and progression of scientific principles. Moving between sets is not possible. At GCSE most current Year 11 pupils are following a double science course but Year 10 are studying single science. The school has made this decision in order to allow time for a GNVQ Information Communication Technology course to be included in the curriculum. Consultation has been undertaken to ensure that pupils can continue science subjects to advanced level. However, the offering of single science does not follow the guidelines of the National Curriculum. This decision could consequently restrict a number of career paths for those

pupils who leave school at the end of Year 11. Extra classes, activities and science weeks supplement the curriculum.

116. Management of the department is satisfactory and it is aware of areas in need of development. All staff are well supported. Newly qualified teachers receive regular lesson observations but the teaching of other staff and pupil books are not formally monitored. Most of the departmental documentation is incomplete. However, clear revision sessions do raise the attainment levels of the pupils. Accommodation for science is adequate although a greater range of resources would enable a greater range of teaching and learning styles to be used. A greater use of displays of pupils' work would provide an environment where pupils use the displays to aid their learning. The science technician is part time putting great pressure on teachers undertaking practical work. As the school increases in size this will become an increasing problem.
117. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The previous report did not identify areas for improvement but the positive aspects of the department have been maintained and the attainment of the pupils is rising steadily. The department has a good base on which to develop further.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The relationships between the teacher and the pupils are good, promoting a very effective learning environment in lessons.
- The quality of teaching, providing all pupils with the opportunity to experience success.
- The progress made by pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The use of National Curriculum levels when assessing the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

118. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 the attainment of pupils was broadly average. A small proportion of pupils achieves standards that are above average. The proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades in the GCSE examinations was below average, but was better than in recent years and part of a continual improvement. The majority of pupils entered for the examination did achieve a pass making the achievements in art better than in most other subjects within the curriculum.
119. Standards achieved by 14 year olds are average. This is a considerable achievement considering the general capability of the pupils on entry into the school at the age of 11. Pupils experience a wide variety of creative experiences and respond well to these. As a direct consequence of effective teaching most pupils show an interest in their work and achieve considerable success. They draw and paint with a reasonable degree of confidence, are competent in print making, ceramics, collage and some three-dimensional construction and have an appreciation for the use of colour, line and tone. The quality of learning of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. They increase their knowledge and understanding about certain artists and cultures and produce interesting work of their own. For example, Year 7 pupils learned about the use of colour by creating landscapes influenced by the work of Turner and Year 9 pupils learned about surrealism by studying the influence of Dali and Arcimboldo, developing their appreciation and understanding of art. Homework assignments are improving research skills and contributing to improving pupils' knowledge in lessons. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, pupils make good progress and those with special educational needs progress well because lesson planning provides them with stimulating opportunities to learn and develop their skills and understanding. The progress of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is also generally good. Some effective extra support in lessons is available for pupils with learning difficulties.

120. By the age of 16 standards are broadly average, based upon the quality of work seen, indicating continuing improvements. The majority of pupils handle a wide range of materials competently and show a sound understanding of their own individual progress. The quality of learning is good because the quality of teaching is very good. Research skills are satisfactory overall and often good. There was evidence of the effective use of computers in art when pupils were conducting research into the Art Deco movement.
121. From Years 7 to 11 there is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls or between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and all pupils have equal access to every aspect of art education. The majority of pupils from Years 7 to 11, including those with special educational needs, make good progress; some make very good progress due to the challenging and often diverse nature of the experiences on offer, combined with effective teaching.
122. Throughout all year groups, the great majority of pupils show sound ability to discuss their work and many are capable of understanding and using technical language. Teachers promote key words and discussions in all lessons and these are having a positive effect upon the pupils' understanding of technical language and the development of opinions based on knowledge and an understanding of art in society. Homework is used effectively by getting the pupils to prepare for future lessons or to consolidate learning. The attitudes of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 are good and often very good in Years 10 and 11. A minority finds sustained concentration, independent learning, problem solving and an understanding of aesthetics difficult. These problems are more common with the less motivated pupils who often have a poor attendance record. A majority of pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons.
123. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers set challenging work and lessons are well planned in order to provide all pupils with opportunities to progress. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The relationships between the teacher and the pupils are very good providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures to raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. The standard achieved by pupils in all year groups is a direct consequence of the quality of teaching. Connections are established in many lessons to the school literacy strategy. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures. The art room and certain public areas around the school contain good displays of work, providing an opportunity for pupils to appreciate the standards of work being produced. Assessment is effective, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and is used as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. In Years 7 to 9, assessment is not linked closely enough to the National Curriculum. Assessment includes a certain amount of pupil self-assessment and therefore when questioned the pupils are well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. The marking of work is always reinforced by supportive comments by the teacher and therefore the pupils in all year groups are well aware of their levels of achievement and what they have to do to make further progress. Pupils with special education needs are given individual learning targets.
124. The management of the department is good, promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Accommodation is good. Resources are good and are used effectively.
125. The art room is equipped with two computers, but their value to pupils' learning is limited because they are not connected to the school network. This would give the pupils direct classroom based access to the Internet thereby improving their knowledge through research. The department also does not have sufficient art based computer software.
126. The last inspection contained no recommendations for future development. Overall, there has been good improvement, with a gradual improvement in achievement since the last inspection. However, the levels of achievement of some pupils continue to be affected by irregular attendance.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The achievement and progress of all pupils.
- Teaching, particularly the planning and pace of lessons.
- Leadership and management of the department.
- The use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at GCSE.
- The use of assessment information to set targets and to improve standards.
- Assessing pupils' work throughout the school.

127. Teachers' assessments of 14 year olds in 2001 showed that attainment was above the national average. However inspection evidence indicates that teachers' assessments are generous. In 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining A* - C grades in GCSE examinations was below the national average and this shows no improvement since the previous year. Standards have remained the same since the last inspection.
128. Standards achieved by 14 year olds are broadly average. Pupils have a sound range of skills, knowledge and understanding. Work in folders is varied and includes opportunities for pupils to generate and develop their ideas in different product areas. The quality of graphics is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 9 although not all pupils have the skill and techniques to fully represent their ideas effectively. Pupils have good skills in the use of ICT, control technology and computer aided design. The good provision and access to computers supports the development of these skills within the context of subject studies. Pupils develop their range of planning and practical skills through the programmes of food technology, resistant materials and graphics courses they follow. This provides a good basis for GCSE work. Planning and designing skills are average while practical skills are above average. Pupils' levels of interest are high and many are beginning to develop a personal style. They are confident in practical situations and they use tools and equipment sensibly and effectively. The standards pupils achieve are aided by good marking that tells them what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils' achievements are good.
129. The work seen during the inspection shows that attainment at age 16 is in line with the national average. Pupils opt for a GCSE course from food technology, graphics and resistant materials. These programmes make different demands on pupils, although they work to a common framework for the presentation of their work. All pupils use graphics effectively, largely because of the emphasis on illustration skills in lessons. ICT is used well, particularly in the folder work in project coursework. Work in design folders is of a good standard and pupils use research and analysis well as they plan their work. Presentation is good and there is much evidence of attractive and innovative design work. Practical work is done carefully and pupils use tools, equipment and machinery with confidence. The quality of design products overall is satisfactory and reflects a wide range of pupil styles and interests. Health and safety matters are given high profile and pupils use appropriate guards, eye protection and clothing. There are good expectations and the department has introduced assessment procedures that monitor pupil progress; this together with effective teaching is helping to raise standards.
130. Pupils' attitudes are very positive and many demonstrate enthusiasm for and enjoyment in, their studies. They are active and show interest in the challenges and assignments offered. Pupils respond positively to codes of conduct in specialist rooms and their behaviour is good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good; this ensures that pupils have the confidence to seek support and this helps their progress. Pupils maintain concentration throughout lessons and they are keen to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs make progress and achievement is good because teachers and support staff ensure that they are secure with their

knowledge and understanding before moving on to the next stage of learning. Most pupils achieve well and the highest attainers achieve satisfactorily. Pupils from different ethnic groups make good progress. Assessment profiles and periodic review provide all pupils and parents with important information about progress and attainment. They are prepared to use their own time to complete projects during lunchtimes and after school.

131. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and this creates a positive learning environment that many pupils find interesting and stimulating. Teachers are experienced and have good subject knowledge. They plan lessons well and use a wide range of resources. They plan opportunities in lessons to enable pupils to introduce their own ideas and influences. The recently introduced assessment system is beginning to provide information to pupils and teachers about progress and will help to raise standards. Teachers have high expectations, set purposeful tasks and keep work moving at a good pace that sustains pupils' enthusiasm and concentration. This is effective in maintaining good behaviour. Homework is closely linked to class work and diary planners are used to communicate with parents. Teachers use display very well and this contributes considerably to pupil interest and the development of ideas.
132. The leadership and management are good. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in both key stages in the form of monitoring and assessment of attainment and progress. The department had specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which was reflected in its work. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. The curriculum has been developed with the result that the activities are relevant to pupils. Schemes of work give detail of long-term planning to show what knowledge, skills and understanding it is intended that students of differing capabilities should achieve. The assessment systems are beginning to be established but are not effective because teachers do not have a sound understanding of the levels of the National Curriculum. Assessment information is not sufficiently well used to set targets to improve standards. At present therefore teachers' assessments are insecure and targets for pupils are not challenging.
133. Accommodation is adequate. Department meetings are used effectively to discuss issues to improve standards in the subject. The amount of technician time available to support the work of the department is unsatisfactory and this has an effect on the standards that can be achieved. The development plan is satisfactory and includes the necessary focus on raising standards, although the means to raise standards are not clearly stated. The level of resources and equipment available is satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Standards are beginning to rise.
- Good management of the department.
- Teachers' commitment to adopt new ideas.
- Relationships between staff and pupils.
- Teachers know their pupils very well.

Areas for improvement

- The use of literacy and ICT.
- Teachers' expectations.
- Teachers' assessment skills in Years 7 to 9 and the use of performance data to set targets for pupils, particularly before the age of 14.
- Implement the new scheme of work for Years 7 to 9.

134. Attainment on entry to the school at the beginning of Year 7 is well below average, particularly in levels of literacy and this has a limiting effect on standards in geography throughout the school.
135. In the teachers' assessments in 2001 the attainment of 14 year olds was broadly average, but this was not supported by inspection evidence that shows attainment to be below average. Teachers' assessment skills, expressed as levels of the National Curriculum, tend to over-estimate attainment. The proportion of pupils obtaining A*-C grades at GCSE in 2001 was significantly below the national average and, within the school, pupils attained almost one grade less in geography than in their other subjects. Nevertheless, when pupils' attainment at the beginning of the examination course is compared with that at the end, they made satisfactory progress.
136. Standards of work by the end of Year 9 are below average. Pupils generally comprehend work sheets well and describe geographical phenomena satisfactorily. They are not expected to use their information to solve problems or to answer questions and the expectation to work independently is limited. Nevertheless, because the standard at entry is so low, pupils make satisfactory progress over time from the age of 11 to 14. Achievement is satisfactory overall although the achievement of higher attaining pupils is limited by insufficient challenge. For example, a Year 9 class was not challenged by an exercise that required them simply to colour an outline diagram of the structure of the tropical rainforest – pupils said they found the work too easy. For the majority of average attainers, achievement in class is satisfactory, whereas those with special educational needs and with very little experience of English achieve well because they are so well supported by confident and competent classroom assistants. There is no difference between the achievements of pupils from different ethnic groups.
137. Standards achieved by Year 11 are well below average, but are improving. The school has concentrated all of its pupils of high prior attainment in one class and geography alternates annually with history as the humanities subject to study to GCSE. Pupils' files show a little extended writing, for example about the factors influencing migration to Preston. Standards of diagrams are good, for example, in those about the types and development of marine erosion, but mapping skills are underdeveloped. There is a heavy concentration on examination technique in files, for example, on learning definitions and an accurate glossary of terms. Folders demonstrate good progress in class. There is no variation in the rates of progress between the various ethnic groups or the very few pupils with special educational needs in this target set. Pupils are working at and above the standard of the average grade D at GCSE. They receive very good, close support from their teacher to focus on learning to achieve well in the geography examination. Pupils know their target grades and what they have to do to improve; for example one girl says that she must revise farming because she understands this least.
138. Progress in Year 10 is not as fast because this is an option group and not the group of high attainers as in Year 11. It has pupils of a wide range of achievement; potential examination achievement is below average, at grade D/E and ranges from A to G. In lessons on the shifting agriculture of the Amazon Basin pupils make good progress overall, though pupils of higher prior achievement do not achieve quite as well as they should and need extension tasks to stretch them further. Those of average and lower ability, special educational needs and pupils of all ethnic groups make good progress.
139. Teaching is satisfactory. It is good in two lessons in ten and is occasionally very good. It is better on the examination course than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is not as good as at the last inspection. Teachers have adequate subject knowledge so that the development of pupils' knowledge is satisfactory. There is insufficient practical work in the lower school for pupils to prepare the necessary skills for course work in the upper school. Teachers do not ask pupils to use the information they learn, so that their understanding and ability to solve problems, are limited. Teachers prepare materials in advance so that lessons can proceed without interruption. They use many photocopied work sheets, particularly in the Years 7 to 9 where the quality of textbooks is unsatisfactory. While teachers' planning of lessons is generally sound, pupils are not consistently informed about the learning intentions of lessons. The strength of lesson plans is that teachers clearly identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers understand the needs of these pupils well, although targets in their individual education plans are not detailed enough.

140. The predominant teaching style is for teachers to inform pupils, with little encouragement for independent learning. Teachers' expectations are often too low and whilst pupils are generally kept occupied once the lesson starts, the most able are not usually stretched. Nevertheless, there is some good practice. For example, in a Year 9 class the teacher talked only briefly before setting the class quite complex work sheets on hot deserts. Then the pupils worked hard; they learned confidently by themselves and achieved well. Good work is sometimes celebrated in Years 7 to 9 to raise self-confidence, but this is not done often enough. Where teachers talk for too long, the classroom assistants are under-employed and some lower attaining pupils become restless. Some time is wasted at the beginning of most lessons, though in other lessons there are good procedures to settle pupils before the lesson starts and these are effective.
141. Relationships are very good, particularly on the examination course where pupils choose to study geography and teachers mostly manage pupils well. Most lessons proceed in an atmosphere of safety and trust. Occasionally a teacher shouts at a particularly difficult pupil in the lower school, but this is unusual. Teachers are in a secure position to make more rigorous demands on pupils. Homework is satisfactory overall and is usually finishing work started in class. In one lesson, completed homework was used well to introduce the next lesson.
142. The school's literacy strategy is not fully implemented, although teachers are aware of the pressing need to improve pupils' literacy skills. There are no effective ways to manage discussions and encourage pupils' development of speaking and listening skills. Few pupils read aloud. Pupils do not write at length frequently enough – they complete work sheets and occasionally use word frames to guide their writing. The inclusion of numeracy skills in lessons is in its early days, but is already having a positive effect on standards, for example, in the illustration of conventional climatic statistics showing different values on two vertical axes on the same graph. The department uses ICT but the computer facilities are not always available at suitable times for every geography set. This represents a management problem for the school.
143. Leadership and management are satisfactory; the head of humanities, who is not a geographer, has been in post for only a short time. Her teaching room is detached from the geography rooms so that she is not available for close support and monitoring. She is very aware of the need to raise standards and has begun a thorough review of geography provision starting with the adaptation to the pupils' needs of the Quality and Curriculum Authority model curriculum for the lower school. This will automatically assist a number of developments, especially the measurement of pupils' attainment and in the planning of lessons. The department has a wide range of assessment information about the attainment of pupils. However, this is not used nearly as well in Years 7 to 9 to measure progress or to set smart targets for individual achievement as in Years 10 and 11, where there is much good practice.
144. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Teaching has deteriorated and standards have fallen. However, the new scheme of work with its planned assessment opportunities offers opportunities for accurate assessment and better planning of lessons to meet the needs of all pupils.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching especially in the use of literacy and information and communication technology.
- Inclusion of all groups in all classes.
- Relationships among staff and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Further raising of standards at age 14 and 16.

- Use of assessment to underpin attainment of higher grades.
- Planning of the curriculum to include targets.

145. When pupils arrive at the school they have few historical skills and well below average levels of competence in writing descriptions at any great length.
146. Teachers' assessments at the age of 14 place the majority of pupils below national expectations, though at higher levels than when they entered the school. There were no significant differences in the attainment of ethnic minority pupils or those with English as an additional language – they all make good progress. Those who have arrived recently at the school directly from other countries make very good progress with the detailed and skilled help that they are given. Standards for pupils aged 16 in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were significantly below national averages. Over the last few years the percentage of A*- C grades gained in GCSE examinations has been below the national average, but has consistently risen. There are no significant differences between boys and girls. Since the last inspection standards have improved marginally and special note should be made of the improvement over the recent years following a previous decline.
147. During the inspection, standards at 14 show only a few pupils reaching the standards expected for pupils of this age, the majority being below average. All make good progress from the low levels they have at their start in the school. From a limited base, they become aware of the importance on the lives of people of the passing of time. Most describe the effects on society of different kinds of government, from feudal to democratic forms. All recall important figures such as Henry VIII, Cromwell and Lloyd George and the part they played in their time. What is lacking is a confident use of primary and secondary source material and making valid comparisons, which can be made only by those of higher former attainment. Pupils who have English as an alternative language, who come to the school having been to primary schools in the area, make good progress, being able to cope with the normal class routines. Less and less support is necessary as they go through the school. Pupils with special educational needs have support, varying according to the extent of their needs and most attain standards which are in line with teacher expectations and make good progress.
148. There are no pupils studying history in Year 11 because of alternating choices each year offered by the school between history and geography. Pupils in Year 10 show below national levels of attainment. They study with rigour. The vast majority describe the events leading to the First World War satisfactorily and retain most of the basic facts needed to follow its course and the events between the two wars, including the rise of Hitler and the Russian revolution of 1917. The volume of their work is commendable. Only the few pupils of high attainment levels are capable of analysing for example, the complex reasons for the settlements in the Treaty of Versailles, whilst all could identify the influence of the politicians. Most made progress in interpretation of sources in a lesson on the rise of Lenin where good help was given to identify the qualities of leadership that helped him to achieve power.
149. Most pupils use ICT competently and experience its use in teaching. Word processing is becoming increasingly part and parcel of normal work. It is the norm for all pupils to use word exercises to expand vocabulary and improve spelling. Writing frames encourage pupils of lower attainment levels to write at greater lengths, which the higher attainers do confidently as seen in a Year 7 class studying the Normans. Numeracy is supported through the use of graphs, like those showing the proportions of people in the feudal hierarchy and calculating lengths, for example, of the reigns of monarchs. All of these benefits are given to and used soundly by all of the groups in the school.
150. Teaching is predominantly good throughout with a small amount being very good. There are no teachers specifically qualified in history but all have good subject knowledge, which they use at least satisfactorily in lessons. Teachers use a range of teaching styles, including the use of a smart board linked to a computer, most of which are well suited to the topics. Pupils enjoy the variety and concentrate well. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to interpret information and learn for themselves. For example, when studying the first World War in Year 9, pupils were given

pictures, from which they were guided to gaining information to help them to understand life in the trenches. When looking at the end of that war in another group, discussion was stimulated to draw out the reasons for the outcomes of the Treaty of Versailles. In some lessons, the tightness of timing of phases was insufficient and concentration lapsed, but never to damage learning fundamentally. Classroom assistants give good support to the learning of those to whom they are assigned. Relationships are good in almost all classes. Pupils in virtually all classes give rapt attention to the teachers, respond well to questions, listen to teachers and classmates and respect everyone's contribution. This is an asset to learning. The school has a good learning ethos. Lessons though good in themselves are not closely linked to National Curriculum targets and pupils do not know precisely what they need to do to raise their standards to the next level.

151. Management is satisfactory. There is assessment at entry to school and at regular and frequent intervals. However, this abundant data is insufficiently used to track progress and to set individual targets. There is a lack of understanding of how planning of curriculum and lessons can be improved by use of this good material. There is good understanding of the general needs of all pupils. Though individual education plans are not specifically related to history, their literacy and numeracy targets are used to help pupils to make good progress across the school. There is insufficient sharing of personal attainment levels with pupils.
152. There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection. Standards have faltered but are rising in recent years. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are better integrated into the curriculum and teaching. Assessment data is insufficiently used to plan lessons and to set targets to raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in lessons.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work well together.
- Resources are good.

Areas for improvement

- Improvement in standards at Key Stage 4.
- Organisation of opportunities for pupils to experience ICT across the curriculum.
- Use of assessment information to guide teachers' planning.

153. In teachers' assessments in 2001, the attainment of pupils age 14 was in line with the national average. In 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades in the GCSE examinations was well below the national average and lower than in the previous year. In 2001, several pupils were not accredited for information and communication technology (ICT) skills gained in the previous year. However, over time performance is improving.
154. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment of pupils age 14 is above the national average within a range of activities. This is reflected in the above average level of quality and quantity of work produced. Pupils have good skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with processing text and images and presenting information. All pupils access the Internet and use this skill effectively to carry out research and download images. Pupils develop their understanding of how to use spreadsheets effectively. They use and remember the formulas for easy mathematical calculations. All pupils are taught ICT and they learn about the full range of applications of ICT expected of them by the National Curriculum. They make progress in these courses and there is opportunity to reinforce their skills in the other subjects of the curriculum.

155. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' attainment in GCSE and GNVQ lessons is in line with the expected standard for 16 year olds. Pupils are confident and they work independently, using a range of software including desktop publishing, a database and spreadsheets. They use their skills effectively to simulate business practice. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. Computers are used in most other subjects to extend pupils' ICT skills and also to increase their learning skills. In the GNVQ lessons pupils work hard to complete their course work assignments. They have opportunities to apply their skills to solve more complex problems particularly in handling information and data. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. The GNVQ course is having a significant impact on pupils' achievement. The assignments meet the needs of all pupils, covering a range of skills and competences and building pupils' confidence.
156. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge of and application of a range of skills. Throughout the school the majority of pupils make good progress through opportunities to develop aspects of desktop publishing, spreadsheets, use of a database, presentation and word processing. Their progress in other strands specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study, is good and sufficient attention is paid to the aspects of control systems, data logging and computer aided drawing. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds is good because the teaching is well matched to individual needs.
157. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and behave well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils are punctual for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work and set themselves suitable targets to achieve and they try to meet them.
158. In specialist lessons the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are planned to a high standard; teachers include demonstrations, explanations and opportunities for pupils to learn for themselves. Pupils find lessons challenging and stimulating. Teachers use the wide range of equipment well and their own expertise is good. They make good use of the available technology, using interactive white boards to present lessons, demonstrate and illustrate skills during whole class and group work. The management of pupils is good and draws strongly on the positive relationships evident in all lessons. Clear targets are set for pupils and work is carefully matched to individual needs, having a significant effect on how well pupils work and their high levels of interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. The skilled support given to all pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence.
159. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory overall, but particularly good in that the school now provides a GNVQ course for all pupils in Years 10 and 11, leading to a qualification in ICT for all pupils. The school has responded to other issues from the last inspection and improvements made include an increased challenge in work set for pupils and improvement in access. Resources have also improved. The joint planning covering all aspects of the subject ensures that the work is challenging and provides progression. At present pupils' achievements across the curriculum are not assessed or fully recognised. Training has been provided for subject teachers so that they can use applications and access the network. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of ICT are not sufficiently planned and co-ordinated across the curriculum to achieve full coherence and progression. Technical support is good and available at all times during the week. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunchtime and at other times when pupils can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.
160. The head of department and the senior management team have established a clear vision and direction for development, matched by strategies to promote improvements. There are specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all,

which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. There is good delegation to ensure the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. At present there is no formal programme of monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching within the department, although teachers have been observed teaching as part of performance management. While opportunities for pupils to use ICT through other subjects are generally good, there is very little monitoring of provision to ensure the National Curriculum requirements are fully met and that pupils' experience is coherent. The head of department has identified appropriate priorities and targets and is taking the necessary action and reviewing progress towards them. The development plan is satisfactory and identifies areas for improvement, for example, developing the use of computers in all subjects so that pupils experience the full range of skills by the end of Year 11. However, it does not include specifically, the work needed to raise standards. There are assessment procedures to monitor the progress and attainment of pupils in ICT lessons, but this is not used as effectively as it could be to inform teachers' planning.

161. The school has made good progress with the areas identified for development in the last inspection. The size and number of rooms is appropriate for the number of pupils being taught. There is a very good level of technical support and this contributes to the smooth running of the department.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in Spanish is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The GCSE results of the boys.
- The pupils' achievement in speaking Spanish, especially that of the ethnic minority boys.
- The very good attitudes of pupils to language learning.
- The good support pupils receive in GCSE preparation in Year 11.

Areas for improvement

- Supporting the learning of girls and raising their attainment.
- Developing schemes of work which fully address the learning needs of all pupils, especially the able pupils.
- Providing able pupils with resources which are appropriate for their language learning needs.
- Providing opportunities for all pupils to develop confidence in personal and creative writing.

162. All pupils study Spanish from Year 7 until the end of Year 9; the most able pupils then follow a GCSE Spanish course in Years 10 and 11, while all other pupils discontinue Spanish and study vocational courses.

163. In 2001, Year 9 teacher assessments showed that pupils' attainment in Spanish was slightly above national expectations, which is an improvement on attainment at the time of the last inspection. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average, after a trend of average GCSE results over the previous three years. The GCSE results of the girls were well below the national average for girls, whereas the results of the boys, against the national trend for modern languages, were above the national average for boys. This continues a trend of widening difference between GCSE results of boys and girls over the last few years. In the GCSE in 2001, pupils performed slightly below the average of all their other subjects. The GCSE results in 2001 were below those at the time of the previous inspection, when they were well above average; however, given the low standards of literacy with which the pupils enter the school, achievement in GCSE in 2001 was satisfactory overall; boys' achievement was good, whereas girls' achievement was unsatisfactory. Standards in the present Year 11 in Spanish suggest a substantial improvement over the standards of the previous year, with an improvement in the performance of girls.

164. In the current Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations overall and their achievement is satisfactory overall. The most able pupils reach average standards for this age group, with several reaching above average standards. The overall achievement of able pupils is satisfactory, as many are capable of higher standards in writing and reading. Low ability pupils reach below or well below average standards but their achievement is good, given their poor standards in literacy when they enter the school. In listening, all pupils make good progress; by the end of Year 9, able pupils can understand familiar language spoken at near normal speed; several very able pupils make good progress and can deduce the meaning of some unfamiliar words in taped language of native speakers without prior preparation. Pupils in the middle and low sets require support in the form of gesture, pictures and revision in order to understand and respond in class. Pupils make good progress in speaking overall and the boys, especially those from ethnic minorities, make very good progress in speaking. This was seen in a Year 7 top set lesson in which several boys spoke very confidently with very good accents in response to the teacher's questions about animals. On the other hand, many girls are less confident in speaking, especially in whole class questioning, but their progress is satisfactory. In reading, pupils make satisfactory progress overall; most can read and understand a range of texts in Spanish appropriate to their ability, developing from simple well illustrated texts in Year 7 to letters and short passages in Year 9 and drawing on more sophisticated language. The progress of able pupils in reading is limited to average standards because they do not have access to a range of higher order reading texts to challenge them. Progress in written Spanish in Year 9 is satisfactory overall and although middle and low attaining pupils make good progress, the exercise books of

higher attaining pupils show that many do not reach the standards of which they are capable. Although the most able pupils can use the past tense and topic based vocabulary confidently in a range of structured tasks, there are not enough opportunities for their writing to develop into short paragraphs drawing on personal memorised Spanish and the use of grammar and vocabulary; they are too dependent on work sheets. Average and low ability pupils in Year 9 write basic language well when using writing frames and gap-filling exercises; their progress is satisfactory overall but the progress of low ability pupils in writing is good.

165. Standards in Year 11 are above average overall and the pupils achieve well at this stage. In listening and speaking, the highest attaining pupils make very good progress and reach above average standards overall, while most other pupils reach average standards overall. By the end of Year 11 the able pupils can identify main tenses and have progressed to understanding the gist of taped exercises such as conversations and descriptions of events and news items. In speaking, pupils make very good progress. Many pupils read aloud confidently and fluently with impressively authentic accents and the boys, especially the ethnic minority boys, are not only keen to speak, but show enjoyment and pride in doing so. The girls are generally more productive in paired conversation work, for example, in a Year 11 group in which the girls expressed themselves in full sentences to describe their holiday experiences. Standards in writing are average and in the second set standards are below average overall. Pupils' written work shows that by the end of Year 11, they have a mature approach to writing and are beginning to use language creatively and confidently. Able pupils write to average standards using familiar topic based language with few inaccuracies and they express themselves confidently using the past, present and future tenses on a range of topics, for example personal presentations, holidays and health; the lower attaining pupils in Year 11 write on similar topics but with a limited vocabulary, requiring writing frames as support. Pupils' reading is also more confident in Year 11; they can understand a range of texts, within which they can deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words. The girls generally perform in listening, reading and writing almost as well as the boys.
166. ICT is recognised by the department as an area for development. Although some pupils in Years 7 to 9 produce good word processed letters in Spanish, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not encouraged to use ICT for individual course work preparation. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall mainly because they learn Spanish in groups for low achieving pupils and because the teachers understand their language learning needs. In a Year 7 lesson for low achieving pupils, the teacher used a range of colourful illustrations well to support pupils in remembering the names of animals. The department generally supports the development of pupils' literacy well, in the careful training of pupils in listening and speaking and in creating awareness of how language works.
167. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is satisfactory overall and in Years 10 and 11 it is good. In all the lessons seen, the pupils were well supported in their learning by the teachers' good planning for the pupils to practise listening, speaking, reading and writing. In a class of higher attaining pupils in a Year 9 lesson about food, the teacher shared the lesson objectives with the pupils who then practised and developed their Spanish in a range of tasks to describe different meals. In some lessons the use of resources is very good; this gives pupils enjoyment and achievement in learning Spanish. For example, in a very good Year 9 lesson for low ability pupils, the teacher used clear colourful writing on an overhead projector transparency to enable low achieving pupils to confidently produce sentences in Spanish about methods of travel. In Years 10 and 11, observation in lessons and the pupils' files showed that teachers focus clearly on examination preparation and support pupils' study skills very well with a range of guidance on revision, grammar and examination technique; this ensures pupils feel confident in, for example, GCSE orals. In a Year 11 lesson for able pupils, the teacher used lesson time very efficiently by covering a range of topics for the oral examination, including holidays and leisure activities and subsequently organising speaking practice in pairs. Teachers do not always support the pupils' learning with appropriate personal resources. For example, although all pupils have personal workbooks in Years 7 to 9, which adequately support the middle and lower attaining pupils, these do not fully extend the able pupils; the writing and reading exercises often limit pupils' use of personal and imaginative use of Spanish and contact with a higher register of vocabulary. In addition, the able pupils require accelerated coverage of the course to match their enthusiasm for

learning Spanish. On some occasions, the learning needs of the girls are not always fully addressed. For example, in a Year 8 top set lesson about preferences in clothes, the teacher chose many more boys than girls for response to whole class questioning and there were very few questions directed at the girls to give them opportunities to speak in front of others. Teachers support pupils well in their learning with detailed marking of their written Spanish and with regular formal testing; however, many pupils do not know how much progress they are routinely making in relation to the National Curriculum levels.

168. Management and leadership of the department is satisfactory. There is a strong commitment to improving standards in GCSE and the department is aware of and taking action to meet new developments, for example ICT training; resources are well kept and meticulously organised. Areas for development are: the GCSE results of the girls; the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9; and strategies for addressing the needs of able pupils and girls in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory overall.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress.
- Very good teaching.
- The very good attitudes of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- More pupils to follow music in Years 10 and 11.
- Increased use of ICT.

168. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment well below the national average. The most recent teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 showed levels of attainment to be below the national average overall, but with the more talented pupils to be gaining good standards. Evidence during the inspection shows pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 to have standards overall in line with the national average and with able pupils continuing to gain good standards. Very good teaching and the very good attitudes of the pupils contribute towards the very good standards of achievement across the three years. No pupils have studied music in Years 10 and 11 in recent years.

169. By the age of 14, pupils compose and perform with considerable success, because across Years 7 to 9 their knowledge of traditional notation is systematically developed and revised through progressive teaching. They read the treble clef accurately when using keyboards, play lengthy melodies and add a range of major and minor chords. They play in up to five keys, with confidence, as early as the end of Year 7. Group improvisations are well co-ordinated and they display considerable originality. One group of pupils in Year 9, performing their own piece of music based on a West Indian work song idiom, demonstrated a distinctive laid back, dreamy atmosphere in their approach. They used their ears well, to keep together; their intonation was accurate, they carefully observed a range of dynamics, and their effective use of pitch bending and blue notes gave an authentic jazzy feel to the performance. Pupils have a secure knowledge of instruments of the orchestra and they recognise them both visually and aurally. When studying spirituals, they clearly have a broad knowledge of African music, of the history of slavery and a good awareness of the elements of blues music.

170. Pupils make very good progress across Years 7 to 9, largely because of the carefully prepared lessons, which enable pupils of all abilities to achieve and to be actively included in practical work. In one Year 8 lesson in which pupils worked on a 12 bar blues, pupils of all capabilities demonstrated their achievement through a whole class performance at the end of the lesson. A talented pupil played the main blues melody on her flute. More able pupils played a second part on keyboards, reading notation. Slightly less able pupils played a third part on pitched percussion and keyboards, using letter names of the notes. Pupils having special needs and

those having English as an additional language, performed a basic rhythmic pattern, which did not require them to be restricted by language or literacy problems. This group performed at a standard overall at least in line with the national average.

171. Three pupils are preparing for GCSE examination entry in Year 11. All are on target to gain good grades, being very competent performers, though one is underachieving a little due to extensive absence. Compositions produced during the course are of a high quality. Pupils use devices such as variation form, ornamentation, fairly advanced harmonies, structure and simple counterpoint competently. Their aural skills are well developed and they use these to good effect when analysing and appraising music. The very tightly structured nature of the course they have followed, taught in a thorough and patient way by the teacher, largely accounts for the very good progress pupils have made through the course. All use the department's computer effectively to store, edit and print their compositions.
172. Pupils have very good attitudes to their music making in all years. They concentrate well during practical work. All enjoy their lessons; they become fully involved with group instrumental work and sing pleasantly and enthusiastically. They respect and take care of the instruments they use. Year 11 pupils are mature in their attitudes to their work, completing and handing course work in, in good time.
173. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are very carefully prepared, with an interesting range of quality resources and worksheets being produced, which raise and maintain the interest of the pupils. Lessons are delivered at a fast pace and include an effective balance between teacher input and pupil activity. There is always a high degree of challenge. The practice of expecting pupils to perform at the end of lessons keeps them on target and contributes to their progress within lessons. The regular feature of revisiting and revising previously learnt skills contributes towards the progress pupils make. The music teacher has thoroughly thought out many means through which to attract pupils to the subject and to make lessons lively and rewarding.
174. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The use of ICT is improving; a new computer has been acquired, with appropriate software and is used effectively in Year 11. Plans are in hand for its use to be extended in Years 7 to 9. A choir has been formed and it performed movingly, in two parts, for the Ascension Day Mass, during the course of the inspection. An instrumental ensemble has been formed, which, though still elementary, performs very musically. There is a broader provision of instrumental tuition by visiting teachers, which is paid for by the school.
175. The department is well led and is steadily making an impact upon school life and on the local community. The spiritual and social development of many pupils is enhanced through opportunities for pupils to perform in public, to take part in music workshops by professional musicians and to give concerts in local churches and other venues.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Improving GCSE results.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are good.

Areas for development

- Improving practical performance standards.
- Challenging the most able pupils and expecting more of all pupils.
- Developing existing assessment procedures to set clear targets for pupils in all activities.
- Improving the allocation of time for physical education for all pupils.

176. The results of teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were significantly below those reported nationally but evidence from lessons showed that the standard of work attained by the great majority was just below the national average. GCSE results for 2001 were broadly in line with the national average and were a considerable improvement from the previous two years. Attainment for other pupils by the end of Year 11 is below the national average.
177. Standards achieved by pupils age 14 are below average overall. Many pupils are unable to apply several of the appropriate techniques, skills and competition rules to athletics and rounders. Basic skills in these activities are average or just below average for most pupils. In rounders, pupils have sound co-ordination, mobility and tracking skills. However, other specific rounders skills are below average and pupils' accuracy in throwing and their fielding skills, are also below average. In athletics, running technique is sound but most pupils lack stamina in middle distance running. The ability of pupils at the end of Year 9 to observe and analyse performance is below national expectations.
178. Standards achieved by pupils in Year 11 are below average. In a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson pupils had a good understanding of basic anatomy and of the location and function of the various joints in the body. Pupils in Year 11 following the GCSE course understood the importance of physical education in schools and the various skills that can be developed through the subject. Year 10 pupils show practical skills in the triple jump that are significantly below expectations. A minority of pupils have skills enabling them to experience success at an appropriate level but a large majority of pupils were unable to execute even the basic sequence of movements despite having been taught the event over the previous two years. Pupils are developing appropriate knowledge and understanding of how different types of activity affect specific aspects of their fitness. Overall, practical skills are not as good as pupils' theoretical knowledge.
179. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually positive. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are often attentive and able to sustain concentration. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are good. Pupils with special educational needs, those in the early stages of English language acquisition and those from different ethnic groups progress as well as other pupils because staff have a sound understanding of pupils' specific difficulties and respond accordingly. There are very few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to undertake different roles such as coach or official. Although non-participants are sometimes usefully engaged in lessons this is not always the case.
180. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all lessons and good in a third. In the good lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning are also features of good lessons. This was illustrated in a good Year 8 lesson on orienteering when lesson objectives were made clear to all pupils and the class teacher and support teachers accompanied pupils on their orienteering course and were able to support all throughout the lesson. Pupils learnt the basic skills of map reading and map setting very effectively. In a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson on anatomy the class teacher involved all pupils in a very lively question and answer session on the joints in the body using a skeleton and some very good practical examples. Pupils experienced success because the class teacher set very clear targets and pupils worked together very well to achieve these targets. In those lessons that were not so good, planning lacked sufficient detail and precise learning outcomes were unclear. Both the range and sequence of activities in the lessons were inappropriate. Teacher expectations of what pupils could achieve are often too low and many are not appropriately challenged. Only very rarely were pupils set clear targets for improvement. Marking of GCSE theory work is thorough but does not identify clearly enough how pupils can improve. However, these pupils do have a clear idea of their targets for improvement because a great deal of extra work at lunchtime and after school is done to ensure that these pupils achieve appropriate examination results. Discipline and class management are good in most lessons but the pace of many lessons is pedestrian and too much time is used at the beginning of lessons to change and register. There are very few opportunities in theory lessons for pupils to become good

independent learners and to take some responsibility for their own learning. Progress in most practical lessons is significantly restricted because the time in the lesson is insufficient to allow appropriate development of the lesson. Activities to extend the most able pupils were not apparent in lessons observed. Subsequently the most able pupils were often not appropriately challenged. Information and communication technology is not yet being used consistently in GCSE lessons.

181. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the range of activities in Years 10 and 11 is now beginning to provide a sound preparation for post 16 leisure activities, although a review of activities in Year 11 may improve this further. However, the time allocated to physical education throughout the school but especially in Years 10 and 11, is not sufficient to cover the National Curriculum in appropriate depth or to ensure appropriate progress. Schemes of work are good working documents and offer clear guidance for teaching in most respects but do not provide activities or guidance for challenging the most able pupils. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities although participation rates for the girls are disappointing. Fixtures with other schools provide opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills and interest.
182. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall. Day-to-day organisation and communication within the department is good and there is an informative departmental handbook which identifies policies and procedures. The staff are good role models, are committed and give generously of their time. Short-term planning is appropriately detailed and has a positive impact on many aspects of the development of the department although there is a lack of clear focus on teaching and learning. Long-term planning is unclear. Assessment procedures are developing and the department has generated an impressive amount of information on pupils which results in end of unit assessment for all courses. However, this information is not yet being used with pupils to set specific targets and is not having an impact on teaching and learning or on the progress of pupils. The last inspection report only identified one area for development, which was to increase the amount of time in the curriculum for physical education. This has not been achieved.