

INSPECTION REPORT

CARDINAL WISEMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Kingstanding, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103539

Headteacher: Mr M F Jones

Reporting inspector: Rod Spinks
2783

Dates of inspection: 22 – 26 April 2002

Inspection number: 191482

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Old Oscott Hill
Kingstanding
Birmingham

Postcode: B44 9SR

Telephone number: 0121 360 6383

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev George Bennett

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2783	Rod Spinks	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements.</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
19491	Rob Jones	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
3549	David Oakley	Team inspector		<p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p>
15048	Peter Lacey	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1464	Shona Walton	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
25743	Peter Butler	Team inspector	Science	
31999	John Parmiter	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4513	John Thirlwall	Team inspector	Art and design	
14604	Barry Lewis	Team inspector	Design and technology	
23920	Steve Lockwood	Team inspector	Geography	
27492	John Barker	Team inspector	History	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
3556	Garry Jones	Team inspector	Music	
14641	Bob Phillips	Team inspector	Physical education	
12493	Peter Moore	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School is a smaller than average secondary school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. There are 625 pupils on roll with slightly more girls than boys. The school has grown significantly since the last inspection. Just over 21% of pupils are listed on the school's register of special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils for whom a statement of need is held is average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties, although a number of pupils have specific difficulties including behavioural difficulties. 40% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The number of pupils from ethnic minority origins is higher than in other schools, mostly made up of pupils from Caribbean backgrounds.

The school is situated in Kingstanding in the northern suburbs of Birmingham and serves a wide area with many pupils travelling some distance to the school. The school is popular and over-subscribed with about half the pupils being from practising Catholic families. Pupils come from the full range of backgrounds, although most come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school covers the full range of attainment but overall is below the national average especially in national assessments at age 11. The attainment of pupils on entry has been rising over the last three years

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School is an effective school with some good features. Standards have been improving for the last three years. Although standards in national tests and examinations are well below the national average, they are well above those found in similar schools by the age of 14 and above average by the age of 16. The quality of teaching is good and most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Despite several changes in headteacher in recent years, other managers and the governors have provided stability and through their hard work have sustained the improvements in teaching and standards. The school gives value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards at Key Stage 3 and GCSE above those of similar schools and showing consistent improvement.
- The management of the school's finances in moving from a serious deficit to a modest surplus.
- A high proportion of good teaching.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards their work in lessons.
- The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
- Good pastoral care and support, ensuring good relationships between pupils and pupils, and between pupils and teachers.

What could be improved

- The consistency with which teachers mark and assess pupils' work and the use of the information to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards.
- The full implementation of the performance management programme.
- The quality of whole school development planning and departmental planning, particularly in art and design, music, physical education and information and communication technology.
- The quality of the physical environment – especially the toilets and changing facilities and the general decorative state of the school.
- The range of professional development of teachers.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Since that time there has been reasonable progress in addressing all the key issues for improvement identified in that inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly and this has led to improved standards by ages 14 and 16. Financial planning and management are better, and the overall management of the school is becoming more effective.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils 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	C	E	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

By the end age of 14 pupils attain standards that are below the national average. In the 2001 national assessments for 14-year-old pupils, the percentage attaining the expected Level 5 or above was close to the national average for English and well below the average for mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 and above was close to the national average in English and well below the average in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, attainment in English and science were well above the average and above average in mathematics. Results show consistent improvement over the last three years and the improvement is above the national trend. The improving standards reflect the school's concentration on improving the quality of teaching for pupils in Key Stage 3. When pupils' results at Key Stage 3 are compared with their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have made good progress in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' work in lessons during the inspection and their written work shows that current standards are now closer to those typically expected and that good progress is being made in response to the good teaching they now receive. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in attaining the targets set for them.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades was well below average. The percentage for five or more A*-G grades was below the national average. The percentage attaining one or more A*-G grades was very high in comparison with the national average. Standards have been rising over the last three years at a faster rate than that found nationally. Generally pupils attained their best results in English and geography and their worst results in science, mathematics, design and technology and religious education. Generally girls are attaining slightly higher results than boys. From a review of pupils' work and in lessons during the inspection, pupils of all abilities are making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported and work hard to attain the targets set for them. They respond particularly well to the mentoring support they receive. Pupils from Caribbean origins make better progress than many other pupils.

The school has set targets for pupils' attainment which are not sufficiently challenging for attainment by the age of 14, but are appropriate for GCSE attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of pupils are positive and work hard in school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, although the behaviour of a few pupils, both boys and girls, is poor.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good and most pupils develop into mature and responsible young people. However, they are frequently too reliant upon their teachers and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Although the majority of pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time.

Pupils show positive responses to their lessons and the other activities provided by the school. They relate very well to one another and to their teachers. Pupils are polite and courteous to both visitors and each other, especially when moving round the school when stairways and corridors become congested. Attendance levels remain below average but there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in response to the school's hard work.

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.

Overall, the quality of teaching was judged to be good. In all, 110 lessons or part lessons were observed during the inspection. 99 lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better with 71 judged to be good or better. In 11 lessons teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory.

Teachers mostly have good subject knowledge, good relationships with pupils and deliver lively lessons, which enable pupils to learn and to make progress. In the good and very good lessons teachers encourage pupils to become enthusiastic and really interested in the work they are doing. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is generally good throughout the school with some very good teaching seen. In the other subjects of the curriculum teaching is good overall. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds respond well to the good teaching and make good progress overall. However, much of the teaching over-directs pupils. This limits their opportunities for investigation and research and so reduces their independence as learners. Teachers also make insufficient use of the marking and assessment of pupils' work to plan what they should teach next. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers have limited subject knowledge and so lessons are not planned to effectively meet the needs of the pupils.

Overall, the teaching of literacy in all subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good examples of extended writing in subjects such as history. However, there are weaknesses in writing in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory with some good examples of the use of numeracy skills in science lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by classroom assistants and additional teachers. The opportunity for pupils and their families to be supported by a learning mentor and by other staff in the learning support unit helps many pupils overcome difficulties they face which affect their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Meets statutory requirements. A range of extra-curricular activities and out of school visits enhance pupils' experiences. However, there are fewer of these activities than is normally found, especially for girls' sporting activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are supported well to make good progress to meet the targets set for them.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Overall, these pupils are supported to make similar progress to their peers. There are no pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory and moral and social development is good. Provision for the development of pupils' independent learning skills requires further improvement.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Pastoral care and support are good. There are weaknesses in health and safety procedures and the physical state of some parts of the school grounds and buildings. The assessment of pupils' work and the use of the information gained in supporting their academic progress is under-developed.

The school provides a curriculum for Key Stage 3 pupils which meets national requirements and for Key Stage 4 pupils the curriculum is well designed to meet their needs. A number of visits out of school take place which support learning, but there are too few of these and those that do take place have limited access for pupils. These factors reduce the impact of visits on pupils' development.

The school has very good systems established for the care and support of pupils although the monitoring of pupils' academic progress could be used more effectively to promote even better progress.

Parents have generally positive views about the school and the school provides parents with a good range of information. The school is open to parents who may contact the school to discuss any specific issues at any time.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The senior management team is too new for a valid judgement on its work, although a good start has been made. Some subject heads of department are very effective in their role but others are less effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have provided a constant level of support over a period when changes of headteacher may have caused instability.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Senior managers evaluate the overall effectiveness of the school well; but heads of department make insufficient use of assessment and attainment data to improve teaching and raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. Provision of teaching and learning resources is adequate but there has been insufficient attention paid to the physical environment. The deployment of teaching staff is inefficient with the current four-period day resulting in a below average level of teacher-pupil contact.

The governors and several longer serving managers within the school have sustained the improvements in the school since the last inspection during a period when four changes in headteacher have occurred. The governors have guided the school to continue with its clear Catholic ethos. They have also ensured that the budget deficit at the time of the last inspection has become a small surplus over the last three years. The changes in leadership of the school have reduced both the rate and amount of school improvement. In particular there has only been partial implementation of performance management procedures and processes which has also limited the professional development of teachers.

There are sufficient staff to deliver the curriculum. However, at the time of the inspection, a number of teacher vacancies were being covered by temporary teachers. The school has had

some difficulty in recruiting specialist subject teachers over the last few years. There are good levels of resources for both teaching and learning. There is also sufficient accommodation for the delivery of the curriculum. However, the general state of the school buildings is poor showing the impact of severe budgetary constraints over a number of years. The toilets and changing facilities for physical education are particularly poor.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress their children make in school. • Children are expected to work hard and try their best. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school buildings. • The amount of homework. • The information they receive about the progress their child is making. • The involvement of parents in their child's education. • The range of extra-curricular activities available for pupils.

The inspection team supports many of the views of parents. Pupils generally work hard and are making good progress to attain standards above those found in similar schools. Whilst pupils do become mature and responsible they have less well-developed research and investigative skills than often found.

The school buildings are poorly maintained and in need of significant improvement. The school does provide parents with general information about the progress their child is making but this information does not explain sufficiently what pupils know and can do or need to do to improve. This reduces the involvement of parents in their child's education. The use of homework varies from class to class and subject to subject, although the amount pupils are expected to do is broadly similar to that in other schools. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited and there are fewer opportunities than found generally in similar schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Overall, standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 are below average.
- 2 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils attain standards which are below the national average. In the 2001 national assessments for 14-year-olds, pupils attained standards in English that were broadly in line with the national average; standards in mathematics and science were well below the average. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected standards of Level 5 and above was close to the national average in English and well below the average in mathematics and science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 and above was close to the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science. In comparison with schools having similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards in English were very high (in the top 5%) compared to the average for Level 5 and above and well above average for Level 6 and above. In mathematics and science, standards were well above average for Level 5 and above, and above average for Level 6 and above. There has been a general trend of rising standards over the last three years at a rate above the national trend. There is, however, a difference between the test scores and teachers' assessments. Teachers have overestimated the standards pupils are achieving in mathematics and science.
- 3 From a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work and the work they do in lessons in Key Stage 3, inspectors judge that standards are now close to those expected in all subjects except art and design, music and physical education. Religious education was not inspected during this inspection, as it is the subject of a separate inspection.
- 4 By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are generally below average in recent GCSE examinations. In the 2001 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades was well below the national average. The percentage attaining five or more A*-G grades was below the national average. When the achievement is measured in terms of average points scores (where A grade = 8 and G grade = 1) standards are well below average. However, the number of pupils attaining at least one graded GCSE pass was very high. Girls achieve better standards than boys within this pattern and standards have been rising at a rate above the national trend over the last three years. The needs of more able pupils are met by early entry for GCSE where these pupils do well obtaining higher grades in Years 9 and 10. The highest standards are attained in English and geography. The weakest subjects are mathematics, science, design and technology and religious education.
- 5 From a scrutiny of pupils' work in Key Stage 4, observation of lessons and talking to pupils, inspectors judge that current standards are now closer to those normally found in most subjects. Standards in English are higher than in other subjects and there are still some weaknesses in mathematics and science. The standards being attained by pupils in Year 10 and 11 following the GNVQ course are good given their earlier attainments, and often above those expected for this course. Pupils with special

educational needs work well to attain the targets set for them and pupils for whom English is an additional language have full access to the curriculum and attain standards which reflect their ability.

- 6 Over a quarter of the pupils currently in Key Stage 3 entered the school in Year 7 with attainment in English and mathematics by the age of 11 below the nationally expected level. Over half the pupils currently in Key Stage 4 entered the school in Year 7 with attainment below that expected at age 11.
- 7 In English pupils are attaining standards which are close to those expected at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. From their current work pupils show limited writing skills particularly in Key Stage 4. Standards of literacy are typical of those expected, however pupils' writing skills are the least developed, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- 8 In mathematics pupils are attaining standards which are below average at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards of numeracy are improving but remain broadly below average in Key Stage 4, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to utilise these skills in the subjects of the curriculum.
- 9 In science standards are now closer to the average by the end of Key Stage 3 in all aspects of the science curriculum. Standards in Key Stage 4 remain below average and are further depressed by the current pattern of single and dual award GCSE courses.
- 10 Standards in information and communication technology are typical of those usually found by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils are able to use their word processing skills to present work in English and other subjects of the curriculum. They can present information using spreadsheets and graphs. However, pupils are given limited opportunities to work independently either gathering or presenting information using information and communication technology.
- 11 Pupils on average enter Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School with below average attainment at the end of their primary schooling. They work hard and are now showing generally good progress in their learning even though attainment by the age of 16 remains below average. Pupils from Caribbean backgrounds are doing better than average and girls are making better progress generally than boys.
- 12 There has been a marked improvement in standards since the time of the last inspection particularly in English. However, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 remains below average although pupils are making good progress in response to the good teaching they receive.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 13 Pupils have good attitudes to learning and most work hard. In discussions they say they like school and this is confirmed by their parents. However, although improving, levels of attendance for both boys and girls are still below national averages, reflecting a lack of commitment by some families to ensure that their children come to school. In addition each day significant numbers arrive well after the start of the school day,

displaying a very casual attitude to punctuality.

- 14 Overall standards of behaviour are good and underpinned by a clear policy. The policy is displayed throughout the school and incorporates rewards and consequences. Pupils are courteous and friendly. They act sensibly when moving around the school and in the dining room at lunchtime. In assemblies they enter in a very orderly manner and remain quiet and attentive. At lunchtimes and after school they use facilities in the library and computer suites maturely without the need for close supervision. Generally school property is treated with respect although windows occasionally get broken and large quantities of litter are dropped.
- 15 In most lessons pupils behave well and are keen to participate. For example in a Year 11 science lesson, pupils gave an effective *PowerPoint* presentation to their peers, who listened with interest. In the Year 9 Industry Day, small groups worked together with great enthusiasm on a variety of tasks relating to job applications. In a Year 11 geography lesson, pupils collaborated to produce an analysis of the aid and development needs of countries. In a minority of lessons standards are not as high: there is an element of restlessness and the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils reduces the learning opportunities of others.
- 16 The school's strong Catholic ethos of caring for and valuing each individual is a real strength of the school, so the school is popular amongst a wider range of parents outside the local Catholic community. The pupils with a variety of heritages and cultural backgrounds mix harmoniously. They benefit particularly from the enrichment to learning provided from time to time that specifically meets their needs.
- 17 Relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils are well known to staff and their achievements are celebrated around the school in displays and photographs. They play and socialise well during breaks; and show concern and help when other pupils are unwell. Pupils with special educational needs or from ethnic minority backgrounds are fully integrated and are included by others in all activities. Bullying or other forms of oppressive behaviour are dealt with quickly and the school has successfully developed an ethos where pupils know right from wrong.
- 18 The school provides some opportunities for pupils to mature and become responsible and is looking at ways to extend these. School and year group councils have been set up and a group of older pupils have started training as pupil counsellors. Some pupils have tasks in the school reception area or help in the library. Overall, however the range of opportunities is limited and many of the initiatives are at an early stage.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 19 The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good at both key stages. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Nine out of ten lessons seen were satisfactory or better compared with eight out of ten in the previous inspection. Two thirds of lessons were good or very good compared with less than one fifth at the time of the previous inspection. More good and very good teaching was seen in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. The improvement is the result of making teaching and learning a priority in the school's development plan, departmental review and support

by senior managers and hard work by teachers. The deputy headteacher has maintained the focus on teaching and learning and the new headteacher has reinforced this thrust. An extensive programme of focused professional development has taken place to improve teaching and learning. The school has not completed the performance management cycle by reviewing teachers' objectives and overall performance and the professional development needs of individual teachers have not been sufficiently identified and addressed.

- 20 Pupils are taught in streamed classes, mixed ability classes and ability bands. The school now favours a banding arrangement which gives more opportunity to move pupils between groups, and distributes boys more evenly across bands to raise their aspirations. In the great majority of lessons, teachers are teaching their first or second specialist subject. Where this is not the case, in physical education, and where there are temporary or supply teachers, there are some weaknesses in teaching.
- 21 The quality of teaching in English is good. Ten lessons were observed at Key Stage 3 and three at Key Stage 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching was good in approximately two thirds of lessons at both key stages and very good in one third of lessons at Key Stage 3. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and manage their pupils well. Relationships are good. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of pupils and use a good variety of teaching styles that engage pupils well. As a result, pupils find their work in English rewarding and most gain confidence in using language fluently. Pupils' progress is particularly helped by the use of constructive marking by several teachers. Comments tell pupils what they need to do in order to improve.
- 22 Overall the quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory. Thirteen lessons were seen, seven at Key Stage 3 and six at Key Stage 4. All lessons were at least satisfactory at Key Stage 4, with half of them good. Lessons at Key Stage 3 varied from very good to unsatisfactory with one third of lessons being very good and a third being unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good, effective planning and delivery of lessons enables pupils to learn effectively. Where teaching does not meet the needs of the pupils they make unsatisfactory progress.
- 23 Overall the quality of teaching in science is good. Thirteen lessons were observed, seven at Key Stage 3 and six at Key Stage 4. Teaching was mostly good at Key Stage 3, with one unsatisfactory lesson. At Key Stage 4 teaching was very good in two lessons and satisfactory in four. Teachers use their secure knowledge of science to plan and deliver generally good lessons.
- 24 Some teachers in several subjects support the development of pupils' literacy skills well, reinforcing the teaching of these skills in English. There is an emphasis on using the correct language and vocabulary in subjects such as science, design and technology and geography. Word walls reinforce technical language and spelling. Pupils generally show good listening skills.
- 25 Teachers support the development of numeracy skills well in mathematics and in the context of some subjects, for example, the handling of data in science, geography, information and communication technology and design and technology. However,

opportunities are missed in many lessons.

- 26 In the great majority of teaching seen, teachers had secure subject knowledge and understanding that enhanced their explanations and enabled them to ask and answer challenging questions. For example, in a good Year 7 mathematics lesson on rounding up numbers to the nearest ten or 100 and understanding place values, the teacher connected ideas very effectively, building on pupils' knowledge and leading them to a new understanding of how numbers can be expressed. On the few occasions where teachers were teaching outside their specialism, limited subject knowledge resulted in some unsatisfactory teaching.
- 27 Teachers' lesson planning was good, although they do not use assessment information sufficiently to ensure a consistently good match between the activities planned and what pupils need to learn next. The use of data on pupils' attainment is improving, particularly for setting targets for pupils, but has yet to routinely inform planning. Good planning usually ensures that lessons are well structured and have a good range of activities in them. This helps to sustain pupils' interest and concentration through the long lessons (typically 75 minutes long). For example, a very good Year 7 lesson in English with a low attaining class was well planned to meet individual learning needs, pupils were grouped for optimal social interaction and activities were lively and well structured. This motivated pupils well and enabled them to make good progress in their understanding of story structure and genre. There were a few lessons in which concentration began to lapse before the end of the lesson, but most staff were remarkably successful in maintaining pupils' interest and motivation. Some stimulating activities also contributed to pupils' good motivation, for example starting a Year 9 science lesson on the properties of gases by bursting a balloon.
- 28 Most teachers manage pupils well, particularly in Key Stage 3 where class management is very good. In a very good Year 9 food technology lesson, for example, the teacher managed the class well by dealing with lapses in behaviour promptly, giving individual support and using her voice well. The support by the technician was well targeted. This enabled the pupils to work methodically, developing their making skills to produce good quality products. Teachers' expectations were generally realistic. There were, however, few occasions where pupils were given opportunities to show initiative. The need to keep pupils on task for the whole lesson limited opportunities for independence and initiative, with the result that no lessons were judged to be outstanding. Use of time, support staff and resources is good. The technical support staff in science and design and technology are used particularly well to support teaching and learning.
- 29 All teachers show an increasing awareness of strategies to more effectively deal with the range of problems being presented by pupils with special educational needs. However, the application of them is not fully developed and results in variations in the effectiveness of the planning and delivery of lessons. When teaching is effective and of good quality the pupils make good progress.
- 30 The quality of marking is unsatisfactory overall. The school policy of grading attainment and effort is followed, but this does not give pupils sufficient guidance, particularly on how to improve. Though marking is usually conscientiously done, and

is used well for encouragement, it is sometimes over-generous. It does not reinforce the skills, knowledge and understanding of subjects sufficiently well. Pupils do not get enough feedback about their progress or how to improve. Pupils at Key Stage 3 have targets linked to National Curriculum levels. However, teachers do not use level criteria to guide their marking. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are aware of their GCSE grade targets but the marking of their work does not indicate clearly enough whether they are on course to attain their targets or what they need to do to ensure they achieve them.

- 31 Homework is regularly set and generally satisfactory, but it is not consistently used to reinforce as well as extend the work done in lessons.
- 32 Pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is sound overall, but their skills are not as well developed as their knowledge and understanding. This is due to an emphasis in lessons on information to be learned and understood rather than application of knowledge using the skills associated with the subject. Teachers are sometimes reluctant to give pupils the freedom to develop their investigational skills, for example, in science and mathematics. Pupils work productively and apply intellectual, physical and creative effort well. Their interest and concentration are generally sound but their independence is less well developed. Pupils' knowledge of their own learning varies. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 4, where they have good knowledge of the examination criteria against which they will be assessed, and they are aware of their targets for GCSE and other examinations. Pupils with special educational needs learn well. They make good progress at Key Stage 3 and very good progress at Key Stage 4. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make sound progress.

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

- 33 Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of all pupils. It meets statutory requirements, though the four-period day places some restrictions on the breadth of curriculum at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, there is currently insufficient time devoted to music. Pupils study music every other week, which inhibits their progress and means that they spend less time on the subject than the national recommendation. There will be additional time devoted to the subject from September 2002 to bring it into line with the national average.
- 34 At Key Stage 4, pupils are unable to study a second foreign language or drama. The design and technology curriculum is also narrow. Double award science is available as an option, single science being part of the core curriculum. Some pupils opt to study the three separate sciences, biology, chemistry and physics, after school, enriching the science curriculum for these more able pupils. Standards of attainment in single science are well below the national average, an indication that the structure of the science curriculum is not meeting all pupils' needs. However, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has several good features. There is provision for vocational education (and well advanced plans to expand this), good links with further education and early entry for GCSE in several subjects. Some pupils in Year 9 are entered for GCSE communication as part of the English curriculum which also offers GCSE in media

studies in addition to English language and literature. Several pupils in Year 10 already have three GCSEs and the highest performing pupil in the local education authority last year left this school with 13 GCSEs. Accelerating pupils' entry for GCSE is a successful aspect of the school's provision for gifted and talented pupils. Other enrichment includes the choice of work placements and activities delivered in school holidays. Extensive training has taken place on ways of stretching gifted and talented pupils in lessons and this is beginning to raise the standards these pupils attain still further.

- 35 Disapplication from design and technology in Key Stage 4 is used to enable some pupils to follow a vocational course in information and communication technology which has good links to post-16 courses. Pupils disappplied from modern foreign languages study vocational courses suited to their needs, such as office skills, child care and horticulture, at a local institute. These courses also provide good links with further education and are part of the much improved provision for curriculum links with further and higher education. A successful bid for Excellence Challenge funding has enabled pupils to take part in *taster days*; residential experiences of further and higher education, study skill days and information meetings for parents and learning mentors. This initiative is proving successful in raising pupils' aspirations. Some, who might otherwise not have considered further education, are now keen to carry on with their education after the age of sixteen. For example, pupils following the information and communication technology vocational course have signed up for A-level study at a local college when they leave school. Relationships with partner institutions are much improved since the previous inspection. Links with the community are sound and the school is seeking to improve them.
- 36 There is equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is provision for a range of needs. Specialist teachers and support staff show good knowledge of their field and demonstrate a highly professional and caring attitude to the planning and delivery of the curriculum for pupils with special needs. Individual learning plans underpin pupils' progress. There are some opportunities for pupils to develop independence as learners, particularly in the vocational courses that they follow at other locations. Pupils with special educational needs are guided well towards educational opportunities post-16.
- 37 Literacy and numeracy skills are being effectively developed in several subjects and provision is generally sound. Use of the Internet and wider information and communication technology resources is satisfactory. The school website is a useful resource. There are more opportunities for pupils to use computer rooms than to use computers in classrooms to support their day-to-day learning. Pupils are enthusiastic in their use of computers in lessons and the IT club is well supported. Currently not all subjects use information and communication technology to support pupils' learning.
- 38 There is a range of extra-curricular activities, in drama, dance and information and communication technology, for example, which enhance the curriculum, but overall this provision is unsatisfactory. There are currently insufficient opportunities, for example, in art and design and in sports activities for girls. Pupils and parents would like to see more opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

- 39 As a result of evaluating the current system of streaming, the school has now placed pupils in parallel bands based on their scores in the national tests at age 11. Because there are fewer boys than girls, boys are distributed evenly across the bands as a way of improving their attainment by raising their aspirations. Feedback from teachers has been very positive so far, but the success of the new arrangements has yet to be formally evaluated.
- 40 Careers education is good. The coherent programme begins in Year 7 and is well planned and enhanced by careers events and work experience. The school's head of careers works very well in partnership with the local careers advisory services. The school has received the Quality Careers Award, Level 3, from Birmingham Careers Education Business Partnership and also its top award for Recognition of Quality for Work Experience. The careers adviser plays a key role in supporting the very successful careers fair while the equally successful industry day was led by a representative from the local Careers Education Business Partnership. The school's links with other schools, further education and higher education are expanding pupils' horizons successfully.
- 41 Curriculum planning within subjects is inconsistent. The good quality of lesson planning for teaching and learning in the classroom has not yet been translated into consistently clear schemes of work to cover long and medium term planning. Current planning does not show how pupils will be helped through a sequence of lessons to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding and make progress as they move through the school.
- 42 The provision for personal, social and health education through the *Design for Living* course in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. It is well planned and comprehensive. The programme covers all aspects of personal, social and health education and includes sex education, substance abuse, study skills, careers education and the completion of a record of achievement. It already has many elements of citizenship education. The weekly personal, social and health education lesson is well taught by senior managers.
- 43 The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. There is some variation in provision between the different aspects. The programme for personal, social and health education provides a focus for moral and social education as do teachers' expectations and the code of conduct. Pupils were involved in the development of the school's code of conduct and it supports good behaviour effectively. Provision for moral development is good and is a strong feature of the work of the school. Pupils are taught to know right from wrong and to respect each other's values and beliefs. For example, the issue of euthanasia was raised for pupils' consideration in a good English lesson. The expectation that pupils will recognise right from wrong and behave accordingly is reinforced by teachers in classes and around the school. This contributes to the good behaviour and positive relationships.
- 44 Provision for social development is enhanced by the good example set by staff in their relationships with pupils. The very good atmosphere in the dining rooms at lunchtime is one example of mutual respect. In some subjects, pupils show they can work together collaboratively in pairs or groups towards a common objective. In a good

Year 8 lesson in geography, for example, pupils worked purposefully in pairs to prepare examples of the impact of human activity on the landscape and then presented these to the rest of the class so that different points of view could be considered and arguments developed. In a very good Year 10 science lesson there was good follow up discussion in groups after pupils had individually researched transition metals. Residential experiences support social development, for instance the Excellence Challenge higher education experience. There is a tradition in the school of charitable work and links with the community such as with the *610* group. There are, however, too few opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative.

- 45 Spiritual development is satisfactory. In its widest sense of giving pupils opportunities to reflect on the significance of their life and work, is limited, particularly within the subjects of the curriculum. Opportunities are taken in geography, but there is no requirement for staff to plan this aspect of pupils' education into schemes of work and opportunities are often missed. For example, in an otherwise good Year 7 English lesson about descriptive adjectives in a Henry Treeve poem, pupils were not asked to reflect on the imagery.
- 46 Provision for cultural education is satisfactory. There are some opportunities in art and design, music, geography, French and extra-curricular drama and dance to appreciate a range of cultures, but there is a general lack of awareness of other cultures in several subjects. The display in classrooms and corridors, for example, does not generally reflect the rich diversity of cultures represented in the school and in multicultural British society.
- 47 The curriculum was judged to be requiring some improvement by the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory with some good features. Time allocations, with the exception of music, have improved. The school now provides 25 hours teaching time each week, in line with government recommendations. The teaching day of four 75-minute periods was introduced to enable pupils to have longer blocks of time for sustained work. This has had some success, but places demands on pupils' concentration and limits the flexibility of the curriculum at both key stages. The school is actively reviewing this to provide the necessary flexibility. The quality of personal, social and health education provision has improved and post-16 links are much improved. The Key Stage 4 curriculum meets pupils' needs very well within the scope of the four-period day. Careers support and guidance remains good. Extra-curricular provision is not as good as at the time of the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 48 This is a caring school where the welfare and pastoral support for pupils are given a high priority within the context of an orderly and secure environment. Pupils know very clearly who they can go to if they need help with problems.
- 49 Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to deal effectively with child protection issues. An experienced head of year is the named person with responsibility for this and has received relevant training. Guidance notes have been issued to staff. Many staff are new, however, and there is a need for further staff

training in their area.

- 50 Generally sound arrangements have been made to comply with the requirements of health and safety legislation. Annual site inspections are carried out by trained safety representatives. Equipment is properly maintained, and the school is supported by local education authority advisers. Remedial work, such as the replacement of the grids at the bottom of the swimming pool, is carried out when advised. However, the arrangements for completing and updating risk assessments vary in quality between departments. A number of specific hazards including the state of gym mats and crumbling surfaces around the playground were noted.
- 51 In an effort to improve attendance levels, the school has worked very hard to introduce more vigorous systems for monitoring and following up pupils' absences. Registration data is checked daily and unexplained absences immediately followed up. The school works effectively with the education social worker, who visits weekly, to target pupils giving cause for concern. There is also a structured programme of rewards and incentives for pupils to encourage attendance; and the importance of this issue is stressed in the *Design for Living* course and parents' newsletters.
- 52 Pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and behaviour difficulties, get a wide variety of additional support from other agencies. Counselling services are bought in from a local organisation, the school nurse runs drop-in sessions for pupils to discuss health problems and the Zacchaeus Centre, run by a partnership of Catholic organisations, runs programmes for individual pupils on issues such as anger management and coping with bereavement. The Schools Beat Officer from the West Midlands police visits the school frequently to work with pupils on a group or individual basis, covering topics such as personal safety, drugs and car crime. The extent of this external input reflects the importance the school places on advising and helping its pupils.
- 53 There are good internal arrangements for monitoring and supporting the personal development and behaviour of pupils. There is a strong pastoral structure through which staff can share information at regular meetings. From Year 8, form tutors and year heads move with pupils as they progress through the school providing continuity and an increasing knowledge of pupils' needs. The school is good at devising flexible solutions to enable pupils to remain in school rather than being excluded, for example by drawing up contracts of behaviour between the school, parents and pupils. The Learning Support Unit devises effective individual study programmes, sometimes on a withdrawal basis, for pupils whose behaviour is proving a barrier to learning. The school also employs a learning mentor who pupils can go to and discuss issues troubling them on a confidential basis.
- 54 The school has good systems for advising pupils on subject choices in Key Stage 4 ensuring that where pupils are disapplied from National Curriculum requirements the alternative courses meet pupils' needs well. The pupils receive good support and encouragement to seek and obtain appropriate post-16 educational opportunities. The increasing number of pupils following post-16 course reflects the raised aspirations of pupils.

- 55 There is no up-to-date assessment policy in the school. However, there is a great deal of information on pupil progress although this is not co-ordinated across departments and there is no central source of information on individual pupils.
- 56 The statutory tests at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3, and the GCSE results are used to measure individual pupils' progress. Results are also analysed according to gender and ethnicity. Other tests are used to predict individual's future grades and then their progress is measured against these predictions. Staff have received training on the interpretation of statistical data but are not yet using it to raise standards.
- 57 Examinations are taken each year by pupils, but systematic assessments during the year which make pupils aware of the progress they are making are not yet fully developed. Pupils build up their own National Record of Achievement but these are not closely enough linked with their progress in general, or their targets in their subjects, to be of real value.
- 58 Individual pupils' progress is monitored satisfactorily by the heads of year, heads of department and a deputy headteacher. Pupils who find work difficult are supported, and praise is given for good work. This monitoring, however, is less effective because assessment is not sufficiently rigorous or linked to attainment levels in the National Curriculum or GCSE examinations.
- 59 The school continues to develop its provision for pupils with special educational needs and for meeting the requirements of the national Code of Practice. These pupils have full access to the opportunities the school provides.
- 60 All pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans which include their targets. All teachers have been made aware of these plans and account is taken of them in teachers' lesson planning. However, insufficient use is made of ongoing assessment to identify what pupils should learn next.
- 61 Parents receive a written report on their child's progress once a year but these are inadequate. They are too general and do not include enough information on what pupils need to do to improve further.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 62 The last inspection report noted that parents had a low level of involvement in the school. To a large extent this remains the case. There is no parents' association and very limited parental help with activities and events, reducing potential sources of additional resources and learning opportunities for pupils. The fact that attendance and punctuality remain issues for many pupils also indicates a lack of commitment by many parents.
- 63 Parents are becoming more involved and the response to the parents' questionnaire for this inspection is greater than for the previous inspection. Parents do express some positive views about the school's expectations and its approachability but significant numbers also have reservations about the information which the school provides and the way it works with them. The annual reports on progress give little guidance on

what parents can do to help their children improve or identify specific learning targets. Limited information is provided on the curriculum and topics being studied by each year group. This makes it difficult for parents to support their children's learning at home.

- 64 The school is aware of the need to strengthen the partnership with parents. It has taken a number of steps recently to improve communication, including the introduction of a well received weekly newsletter and evening meetings focusing on specific topics, such as measures to improve the progress of some Year 7 pupils. These have been well attended. It is looking to revise the format of the main parents' consultation evenings. At present these allow limited time for meaningful confidential discussion and are poorly attended, despite efforts by the school to contact specific parents when there are issues to be discussed.
- 65 The school is working hard to improve its partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are encouraged to take an active part in supporting the school in meeting the needs of their child. Opportunities to support learning at home and to contribute to annual reviews are provided; but too often the views of parents are not provided and therefore do not influence the arrangements the school is wishing to make.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 66 There have been many significant changes in the leadership of the school over a long period of time. There have been four different headteachers since the last inspection in 1996. This has resulted in some changes in priorities for development which have on occasions had insufficient time to become fully established. Through this period of change, consistency has been achieved in areas such as improving the quality of teaching and the standards pupils attain through the hard work of senior managers and some heads of department. The governors have supported the school well to improve the financial position and to ensure the school continues to meet its Catholic aims.
- 67 The recently appointed headteacher has established the senior managers as a coherent team who are now identifying future development priorities in a school improvement plan. They are identifying the longer term planning needed to replace the inadequate one-year development plans of the past.
- 68 The senior managers are evaluating the work of the school carefully, including the detailed analysis of attainment data. The school compares its performance with data on both national and similar schools. Managers use the information to identify weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum and then supportively manage improvements; some middle managers are not yet playing their full part in this process. They are not monitoring the work and effectiveness of their departments in order to identify weaknesses and plan for future improvement.
- 69 The school has clear aims, which commit it to equality of access for all, to the improvement of standards and to sustaining the positive Catholic ethos. However, current curriculum organisation results in some limits on access and attainment. The four-period day has long lessons in which both pupils and teachers find it difficult to

sustain concentration and effort. The continuity of work in some subjects which pupils only follow for one period each two weeks (such as music) or in short five-week bursts (as in art and design) means that progress is slowed for some pupils.

- 70 The managers and teachers are fully committed to continuing to improve the quality of education and the standards that pupils attain. They have the capacity to continue the significant improvements already achieved.
- 71 The current arrangements for performance management of teaching staff are not clearly linked to wider school improvement strategies and are unsatisfactory. Progress towards the performance objectives agreed for staff last year has not been systematically monitored or reviewed. Staff new to the school since last year do not have performance objectives. The lack of continuity at headteacher and senior manager level has led to the limited implementation of performance management. A re-launch of the arrangements for performance management is planned for this term. This will be led by the headteacher.
- 72 The school does, however, have some effective arrangements for school self-review in place. Senior managers take responsibility for reviewing subject departments. They have carried out a systematic programme of lesson observations, which have explicit criteria, and scrutiny of samples of pupils' work. These findings, together with the monitoring of pupils' results in the national tests at age 14 and GCSE at age 16, have enabled needs for professional development and support to be identified and strategies for improvement to be put into place. For example, in design and technology a full programme of support for the review of schemes of work, classroom management techniques and use of pupil performance data was arranged using the local education authority's advisory service. This has led to improvement in this area of the curriculum. There have also been improvements in standards of attainment in history and English as a result of school self-review. The role of subject leaders in monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching has not been sufficiently improved by the arrangements for performance management currently in place.
- 73 Professional development of staff is successfully managed by the deputy headteachers. The programme of professional development is firmly based on the priorities identified in the school and departmental development plans and also on individuals' development needs, in line with the *Investor in People* philosophy. In-service training in techniques to improve teaching and learning has been a school focus over the last two years. National experts have led the training, which has been successful in raising the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. There has, however, been insufficient sharing of good practice within school both within and between departments.
- 74 The governing body is well informed and fully conversant with its roles and responsibilities. There is an effective committee structure, which enables the governing body to manage its responsibilities and day-to-day work effectively. The budget is set carefully against the school's development plan and over the last few years a deficit has been managed to become a reasonable surplus. The lack of funds over the last few years has had a detrimental effect on the maintenance of the school buildings.

- 75 Governors are well informed about the work of the school, its strengths and weaknesses. They set appropriate short-term priorities for the development of the school since the last inspection but have yet to establish the strategic direction for the continued development of the school.
- 76 The school has set targets for pupils' future attainment but these have not taken sufficient account of the improving attainment of pupils as they enter the school in Year 7. The setting of targets is based upon the use of some assessment information but they are insufficiently challenging at Key Stage 3 and the current targets set should be exceeded.
- 77 The school has raised the profile of special educational needs and the provision that is made is very effectively managed. The statutory requirements of the Code of Practice are met. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is clear about her role and provides strong and effective leadership to this area of the school's work. The administrative process is becoming more effective and procedures for early identification and review are firmly established. The support staff employed to work with statemented pupils and those who offer learning support are effectively deployed and their work makes a significant contribution to the good progress that pupils make. Monitoring of provision is less well developed, and needs reinforcing to ensure that there is greater consistency of approach across all staff and all subject departments.
- 78 The school is making effective use of most additional resources from specific grants. However, the use of the grant for pupils for whom English is an additional language is not sufficiently targeted on these pupils. The funding is being used for general support.
- 79 Whilst the school is following the four *best value* principles in its work, it does not yet fully state its *best value* procedures and does not yet fully meet the principles of best value. It does compare its effectiveness with other schools but targets for future success are not sufficiently challenging and there is very limited consultation of parents' and pupils' views on future development needs.
- 80 The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting staff over the last three years. At the time of the inspection two staff had only been in the school for one week and a vacancy and an illness were being covered by five teachers on temporary contracts and by daily supply staff. Staff absence rates are not above the average and many schools are facing recruitment difficulties but the staffing difficulties have reduced the quality of education for some pupils.
- 81 Overall, apart from the problems identified above, there are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers but they are not deployed as effectively as they could be. Although the school provides the recommended teaching time for pupils this is delivered through four lessons each day. The structure of the school day is not efficiently using time. Many pupils and teachers find the last quarter of the long lessons difficult to manage. There are a number of very effective support staff and teachers who support pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

- 82 The school building provides for all specialist subject needs. It is kept clean but does not provide a welcoming learning environment. The building is in need of significant refurbishment generally. More specifically; both the boys' and girls' toilets as well as the changing facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory. There are limited social spaces for pupils in any year group, and pupils are only given limited access to the building outside of lesson time. The outdoor playgrounds do not have social areas and the playing fields are not available to pupils at break or lunchtime. The school has its own indoor swimming pool, which provides a good resource.
- 83 There are broadly sufficient learning resources. The school has sufficient computers, which are accessible to most teachers to support the work in their subjects. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology or the library resources for independent research to support their learning in the subjects of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 84 The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions to further improve the quality of education by:
- (1) Improving the consistency with which teachers mark and assess pupils' work, to enable them to use the information to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards further.
[27, 30, 55, 57, 58, 97, 111, 112, 142, 175, 190]
 - (2) Fully implementing the performance management programme, in order to improve the quality and consistency of subject management.
[41, 68, 71, 72, 98]
 - (3) Improving the quality of development planning, to ensure the sustained improvements in the quality of education and the standards pupils attain, particularly in art and design, music, physical education and information and communication technology.
[41, 72, 105, 121, 130, 164, 176, 196]
 - (4) Improving the quality of the physical environment – especially the toilets and changing facilities and the general decorative state of the school.
[50, 74, 82, 112, 133, 197]
 - (5) Extending the professional development of teachers to:
 - increase their awareness of the effective ways of monitoring and evaluating teaching, [72, 73, 121]
 - develop ways of increasing the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. [73]

85 The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, may also wish to address the following areas in their action plan:

- (1) Review the school's timetabling arrangements to make staff deployment more efficient.
[33, 34, 69, 81, 176, 197]
- (2) Review targets for pupils' results in tests and examinations, and ensure that they are sufficiently challenging. [76]
- (3) Seek ways to provide social areas for pupils, both inside and outside the school building. [18, 82]
- (4) Further develop opportunities for pupils to use their research and investigative skills. [32, 44, 96, 102]
- (5) Continue the current work to improve attendance. [51]
- (6) Seek ways to involve parents more in the education of their children.
[38, 61, 62, 65]
- (7) Seek ways to increase the range of extra-curricular activities for pupils.
[38, 196]

The numbers in brackets relate to the main paragraphs of this report where these issues are mentioned.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	110
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	21	50	28	9	1	1
Percentage	0	19	45	25	8	1	1

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	625
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	252

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	134

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	36

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
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	57	60	117

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	33	26	30
	Girls	47	36	31
	Total	80	62	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (68)	53 (50)	52 (50)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (42)	23 (22)	16 (15)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	37	15
	Girls	38	43	28
	Total	59	80	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (49)	69 (43)	37 (55)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (14)	40 (11)	9 (17)
	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	45	50	95

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	9	38	45
	Girls	19	47	50
	Total	28	85	95
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	29 (36)	89 (98)	100 (100)
	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	31.5 (35.1)
	National	39 (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	55
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	47
Indian	1
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	516
Any other minority ethnic group	3

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	13	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	466

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	23.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	1,911,344
Total expenditure	1,877,707
Expenditure per pupil	3,301
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,940
Balance carried forward to next year	49,577

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.8
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	625
Number of questionnaires returned	323

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	31	57	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	44	4	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	40	11	4	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	45	13	7	1
The teaching is good.	38	51	6	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	37	23	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	34	6	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	40	20	5	4
The school is well led and managed.	39	45	5	1	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	48	5	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	41	13	6	9

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- High standards.
- Good teaching.
- Promoting the use of information and communication technology.

Areas for improvement

- Performance management of staff.
- Assessment of pupils' work.
- Medium and long term curriculum planning.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to learn independently.

86 Overall standards in English are now more typical of those normally found by ages 14 and 16. Standards in national assessments for 14-year-olds show improvement over the last three years and are in line with national averages. Attainment is high in relation to similar schools at both Level 5 and Level 6. Girls perform better than boys in attaining the nationally expected Level 5. On entry, pupils are coming to the school with standards of English below the national average and they make good progress. In lessons in Years 7 to 9, observed standards are in line with the national expectations for both boys and girls and for ethnic minority pupils. Standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs are high in relation to similar schools. Some more able pupils attain a GCSE at the end of Year 9 in communications studies.

87 By the age of 16, standards at GCSE have consistently been well below national averages in English for both boys and girls. In English literature, just over half the year group is entered compared with a greater proportion nationally, and recent results have been above the national average overall. Girls achieve well above the national average, and boys are in line. In English lessons observed, standards in both subjects are nearly in line with those typically found at all levels and for all groups of pupils, though standards in writing, especially of lower and middle ability boys, are less good than in reading, speaking and listening. Progress through the key stage is at least satisfactory and often good.

88 Compared with other subjects in the school, English GCSE results are high, especially for boys. The majority of pupils are entered for an additional GCSE in communications and attainment in this is above national averages, especially at the higher grades.

89 The school continues to give a high priority to the development of literacy skills. The school has prepared staff well for the implementation of literacy across the curriculum and has used external consultants and staff expertise to improve teachers' understanding of how they can improve pupils' literacy skills within their own subject

areas. Literacy is identified as a target in the school's development plan, but as yet there has been no structured monitoring of the impact of the action points. The manager of the Key Stage 3 Strategy now has responsibility for integrating literacy into the overall action plan for the future to ensure consistent delivery in all subjects of the curriculum.

- 90 Evidence of the impact of the literacy strategy is patchy. In geography lessons, there is a strong emphasis on promoting reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is a significant improvement since the last report. In modern foreign languages, Year 8 and 9 pupils wrote competent poems in Spanish. In most other departments, attention is given to the introduction of subject-specific vocabulary, for example key words are displayed and referred to regularly during lessons. An imaginative literacy handbook has been issued to pupils, but was not observed in use by them. Also, a word-bank book has recently been introduced and is already being used enthusiastically by younger pupils. More consistent promotion in lessons would be a useful consolidation. In many classrooms, there are posters of words to help pupils to structure their extended writing more effectively. When senior managers monitor the quality of work in pupils' books, they focus on standards of literacy in all subjects. They also check that all teachers pay attention to literacy in their marking.
- 91 Overall, pupils' literacy skills are sufficient to allow them access to the full curriculum.
- 92 17% of the school population belongs to an ethnic minority group, the majority being Caribbean. 18 pupils (3%) are identified as having English as an additional language. This is higher than in most secondary schools. The language needs of these pupils are assessed by teachers of special educational needs and English, with no specialist input from the local education authority services. None of these pupils are deemed to require bi-lingual support. Where these pupils have other special needs, these are generally met by the learning assistants working in classrooms alongside teachers, or by short-term programmes for which pupils are withdrawn from lessons, for example the Literacy Progress Units and a social and communications skills development programme led by an educational psychologist. In these groups, pupils from all ethnic groups are also represented.
- 93 From the evidence of discussions with a high proportion of the pupils identified by the school as being multi-lingual speakers, and from observations of them and their work in English lessons, they are well integrated, use English as confidently as their peers, and are often in higher attaining groups. However, the learning assistants have had no training in relation to English as an additional language, and there is no specialist expertise on the staff. Overall, awareness across the school of the potential language needs of these children is low.
- 94 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is often good or very good, and is a strength of the department. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of English teaching are good: non-specialists and specialist teachers have complementary skills in subject knowledge, teaching methods and pupil management. In a bottom set Year 9 class, pupils with special educational needs sequenced well-produced images to reinforce their recall of events in the dagger scene from *Macbeth*, choosing

appropriate quotations and commentary to answer a question from last year's test paper. This not only met their needs as learners, but also confirmed their self-image as students of Shakespeare. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement and attitudes. They make regular reference to examination success and consciously teach the necessary skills: Year 9 pupils analysed test scripts against the examination board's criteria, and a Year 10 class wrote the opening paragraph to an exam answer and critiqued each others' drafts. The long lesson is invariably well used, combining a variety of activities, but allowing sufficient time for extended work where necessary, especially for upper GCSE sets. Information and communication technology is used extremely well to support progress. A teacher used *PowerPoint* to model essay structure; pupils analysed websites for children to judge their quality, skilfully navigating the Internet and a bottom set Year 7 class used a specialised clip-art programme to create vivid and detailed *PowerPoint* sequences of a West Indian tale. Displays in classrooms are almost all expertly word-processed. In folders of work, almost all pupils have a significant proportion of work which they have produced using computers, including imported images, text manipulation and Internet research.

- 95 In lessons, pupils almost always make good or very good progress. They acquire and reinforce language and analytical skills and develop their knowledge and understanding of such things as genre and writing style. In nearly all lessons, pupils show interest and concentration, and when given the opportunity, they are able to use independent learning skills although such opportunities are relatively uncommon. A greater precision by teachers in the framing of learning outcomes, shared with pupils and reviewed at the end of the lesson, would enable pupils to focus their efforts and to be more independent of the teacher's guidance.
- 96 Attitudes to English are consistently good in lessons, and the relationships fostered between pupils of both genders and of all ethnic groups, and between pupils and adults are a strength of the department. Teachers often move pupils into new groupings where they work collaboratively and with mutual respect. In the paired reading workshops and small withdrawal groups for pupils receiving additional language support, the relationships and attitudes created by learning support assistants contribute significantly to the progress pupils are able to make. The behaviour of pupils is consistently good in English lessons, and this enables them all to learn confidently in a productive environment. Many pupils are able to complete optional additional GCSEs with minimal supervision, indicating an ability to learn independently that could be exploited further across the department: at present, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning in lessons. A significant contribution to this aspect of development would be the opportunity, currently missing, for pupils to engage regularly in drama and more active learning experiences within curriculum time. The commitment of the department to addressing explicitly in lessons issues of oppressive behaviour such as bullying, seen in lively lessons in both key stages, contributes to the good attitudes and ethos in the school, and to pupils' moral development.
- 97 Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well, and ensure that targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs are included in their teaching. At its best, the marking of pupils' work is exemplary, but it is too

inconsistent between teachers. Although there has been a number of initiatives and a recognition of the importance of data, the use of assessment information to monitor progress has not developed in line with practice nationally: systems are not coherent and the management and analysis of data are inadequate. In particular, the use of assessment data on entry, the consistency of value added data, and an individual target-setting process that acknowledges subject-specific learning targets as well as attainment targets, are under-developed.

- 98 Since the last inspection, many of the strengths identified have been maintained; quality of teaching, standards, the range of multi-cultural texts, display, information and communication technology provision, and additional support time. There have been improvements in many areas identified as in need of development: the library has improved significantly, the challenge provided for older, less able pupils is now consistently high, as are teacher expectations; and non-fiction writing is now being addressed effectively. In two important areas however, there has been insufficient improvement: one is in assessment and the other is in aspects of subject management. In particular, the lack of a performance management structure in school has held back the professional development of the staff. The lack of a robust, integrated system of curriculum planning in the department means that teachers and pupils are not always clear about what and how they should be teaching and learning. There are good models within the department that could be more effectively shared.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The results of 14-year-olds in the national tests are well above the average for similar schools.
- The quality of teaching, which is good or better in nearly half of lessons.
- The positive attitude of pupils to their work.
- Productive teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships.
- The progress made by higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- Further improvement in standards, particularly the proportion of pupils attaining a grade C or better at GCSE.
- Making more use of assessment data to inform planning so that pupils build on what they already know and can do.
- Using assessment data on entry to the school to set challenging targets in order to raise further the expectations of pupils' performance.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to develop skills of mathematical reasoning and to conduct independent lines of mathematical enquiry.
- Using information and communication technology to benefit the teaching and learning of mathematics.

- 99 Overall, pupils' attainments are below the national averages at ages 11, 14 and 16. Performance in the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 was well below the national

average but well above average for similar schools. There has been year on year improvement in these results, at a rate faster than the national rate, since the last inspection, with girls improving faster than boys. The proportion of 16-year-old pupils attaining a GCSE at any grade is now in line with the national average, though the proportion who attain a grade C or higher remains well below the national average but above the average for similar schools. Over the last three years there has been a marked improvement in the attainment of pupils coming into the school.

- 100 Between the ages of 11 and 14 pupils make satisfactory progress and are now attaining standards closer to those typically found, although still below. Girls make more progress than boys. Higher attaining pupils make good progress, as do pupils identified as having special educational needs. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils are solving simple linear equations, factorising simple quadratic expressions and applying Pythagoras' theorem to find the unknown length in right-angled triangles. Lower attaining pupils calculate with decimal quantities but have difficulty in finding the percentage of a quantity. Over their last two years at school pupils overall make progress at a similar rate to that nationally. By the age of 16 higher attaining pupils are arithmetically fluent, they solve quadratic equations, manipulate expressions with negative and fractional indices and find areas of sectors and lengths of arcs of circles. Lower attaining pupils find fractions of quantities, interpret bar charts and find areas and perimeters of rectilinear shapes.
- 101 Current standards of numeracy are broadly typical. Pupils in their last year at school interpret complex tabular and graphical presentations of data in science and geography lessons. In their first year at school, pupils use grid references and construct cross sections from contour lines. In an information and communication technology lesson they were helped to use the 24-hour clock when constructing a database on the duration of television programmes. The teaching of numeracy is benefiting from the introduction of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, particularly for pupils in their first year in the school. However, contexts from other subjects are insufficiently used in mathematics lessons.
- 102 Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are generally good and most are keen to achieve. With few exceptions, pupils show interest in the subject, listen to teachers' explanations and work diligently on tasks set. Behaviour is good. Relationships inside the classroom are good and this creates a climate conducive to learning from which pupils benefit. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to pose their own questions and to use their initiative to follow their own lines of enquiry.
- 103 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. 85% of lessons seen were at least satisfactory and just under a half good or better. Clear explanations of mathematical methods stem from teachers' good subject knowledge. Teachers' planning of lessons is good. Learning objectives, which are shared with pupils, give clarity and purpose to lessons and support the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Teachers use time well, breaking the long lessons into sections of mental activity, instruction and work on exercises. This promotes a good pace of work and enables pupils to sustain their interest through the lesson. With few exceptions, the management of pupils is very good. High expectations of behaviour are understood and adhered to by pupils. Questions asked by the teacher during the lesson ensure concentration and increase the

progress made by all pupils. In the best lessons, the responses of pupils to teachers' questions are listened to by all pupils and developed into further teaching points. In less effective lessons, pupils' responses are not developed nor listened to by the rest of the class. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress in a practical lesson on reflections in which a support teacher was deployed to good effect. Gifted and talented pupils receive no special provision though the higher attaining groups in which they are placed respond well to work of an appropriately challenging standard. A very good GCSE revision lesson focused on areas of mathematics in which pupils had earlier demonstrated errors. However, most lessons did not explicitly build on what pupils already knew or pick up on areas of previously identified misconception. There is insufficient emphasis on diagnostic assessment and, in a small number of cases, teachers marking of pupils' work is scant and fails to identify pupils' errors and misconceptions.

- 104 Mathematics lessons contribute to pupils' social development. Pupils work well together, sharing resources and helping each other when working on tasks.
- 105 Management of the mathematics department is satisfactory. Documentation is thorough and supports the induction of new teachers. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has led to a mathematics audit and action planning which complement a process of review already underway in the school. The school development plan sets out actions for implementing the priority of numeracy across the curriculum. However, the activities proposed in action plans are not sufficiently related to outcomes for raising levels of attainment. Pupils' work and the quality of teaching are monitored but the information gained is not fully used to improve the work of the department. Analyses of pupils' attainments at the start of each key stage do not sufficiently inform targets for pupils' performance at the end of the key stage. The improved performance of pupils on entry to the school is not reflected in the targets set for performance of 14-year-olds.
- 106 Curriculum plans are satisfactory overall but put insufficient emphases on the use and application of mathematics and the use of information and communication technology. Over the past year the school has had difficulty in recruiting supply staff to cover for staff absence and this has affected continuity of provision. The department has recently regained stability and the level of staffing is now satisfactory. Accommodation is satisfactory but some classrooms could be improved with more informative posters and displays of pupils' work that exemplify expected standards. Levels of resources are inadequate. Graphical work is inhibited through a lack of graph nets on the white boards and there are no computers in classrooms for teachers to demonstrate mathematical principles and properties in their teaching. With the exception of information and communication technology, teachers make effective use of the available resources.
- 107 Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and pupils' results have improved. Lessons are more interesting at Key Stage 4. However, there has been insufficient improvement in developing the skills of mathematical enquiry and the use of assessment to improve planning and to help pupils what they need to do in order to improve. The effective use of information and communication technology has deteriorated since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department are good.
- Attainment at the end of Year 9 in comparison to similar schools is above average
- Effectiveness of teachers' planning and of teaching methods is good.
- Behaviour of pupils is good.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of pupils in GCSE examinations.
- Assessment practice and the use of assessment information to guide teachers' planning.
- Aspects of the accommodation.

- 108 The overall standard of work seen by the end of Year 9 is just below that expected. In national tests in 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining Levels 5 and 6 were below the national average. They were well above average when compared to similar schools, and pupils' achievement is above the expected level based on their prior attainment in national tests at age 11. Pupils' results in the tests were similar to those in mathematics and below those in English. In work seen during the inspection pupils showed good scientific ability, as demonstrated by a Year 9 group confidently expressing ideas about the theory of matter and a Year 7 group successfully undertaking an investigation into the use of vegetable dyes as indicators.
- 109 The standard of current work seen by the end of Year 11 is below that normally found but typical of that expected based on pupils' prior attainment. The GCSE results for dual award science in 2001 were well below national averages. They were at the same level as for the previous year when it had been offered as an option for the first time. The very low attainment in terms of top grades (A*-C) remains disappointing but there are some indications of improvement. In the current Year 10 pupils were following a newly introduced modular syllabus and a greater proportion of pupils have achieved top grades in the first two modules. The GCSE results for single award science were well below national averages and those of similar schools. In comparison to other core subjects attainment in science is similar to mathematics and below English. In work seen during the inspection a Year 10 group demonstrated good research skills in a data seeking exercise on the school website and a low attaining Year 10 group showed confidence and understanding when answering questions on the electromagnetic spectrum.
- 110 Across all years pupils show a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour is good in science lessons and around the science teaching area. Pupils working in small groups show respect and support for each other, and there are good and constructive relationships formed between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils clearly enjoy science and they generally stay on task and work with good concentration throughout lessons. Special educational needs pupils are fully included in lessons and receive good support from other pupils as well as from staff and designated support teachers.

- 111 Overall the quality of teaching is good. There was no significant variation in standards of teaching seen across the years. Teachers have a good command of their subject and plan lessons carefully with clear targets. Lessons are on the whole well managed with a variety of activities and teaching methods which enable all pupils to learn effectively. Where a lesson was judged less than good, this was due to an over-emphasis on teacher-centred delivery and a failure to challenge pupils to reach their full potential. In basic skills teaching pupils are benefiting from the integration of the *Thinking Science* project into schemes of work for Years 7 and 8, and there are opportunities throughout all years to develop wordpower and write creatively. Questioning techniques in lessons are satisfactory but sometimes test only simple recall. Homework is not always constructively set and clearly fails to extend pupils' learning. The quality and frequency of the marking of books vary. In some cases there are examples of praise, with supportive and informative comments which are of definite benefit to pupils, in others little more than an acknowledgement of work completed.
- 112 The leadership and management of the department are good, with a clear direction given by the head of department and a strong, shared commitment by the teaching staff towards improvement of the subject. There have been a number of staff changes in recent years which have slowed progress in important developments. The staffing position is now more settled. Teachers are not using their assessment of pupils' attainment to guide their planning and raise standards. Technician support is good and the department benefits from a post which is part technician and part support teacher for special educational needs. All science teaching takes place in laboratories which, although of a good size and well maintained, do not provide a stimulating environment for the pupils. Considerable efforts are made to enhance the accommodation with charts, posters and displays of pupils' work. The preparation room and the storage facilities for chemicals and glassware are inadequate. The department does benefit from a dedicated computer room with 16 networked workplaces. At the moment these are used mainly as information and data sources, the use of information and communication technology and its applications linked to experiments is still at an early stage of development. The level and standard of resources including equipment is satisfactory and the provision of textbooks and workbooks for all years is good. The department also co-operates well with the library over the purchase of new books to support curriculum changes or new developments.
- 113 In the period since the last inspection there have been improvements in ensuring that pupils now have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of all lessons. There has also been a movement away from over directed, teacher centred work towards the use of a variety of teaching and learning approaches which enable all pupils to learn effectively. Science staff now arrange a programme of visits and other activities of a scientific educational nature to enhance the curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality and provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Discipline and organisation of lessons ensures that all pupils understand the studio routines.
- Staff develop good relationships with pupils which ensure that learning takes place in a supportive atmosphere.
- Display within the studios creates a stimulating learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- The standards pupils attain by age 14 and 16.
- There needs to be a stronger relationship in teaching and learning between what pupils do and what artists do.
- The timetabling of art and design lessons in five-week blocks.
- The opportunities for spiritual, cultural and social learning.
- The resources for practical and contextual activities.

- 114 By the age of 14 standards are broadly in line with those normally found, with girls and boys reaching similar levels of achievement. By the age of 16, the number of pupils awarded A*-C grades in the GCSE in 2001 was well below national averages, with no significant differences between the achievements of girls and boys. Results have remained below national averages over the last three years.
- 115 In relation to their earlier learning, most pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school, although this would be improved with a less fragmented programme of art and design teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall.
- 116 Pupils at Key Stage 3 have the opportunity to engage with a variety of practical activities designed to increase their drawing, painting and language skills. A Year 7 class were learning about tonal gradations using graphite and colour which would have application in future lessons. Tone and colour gradation was being used by a Year 8 class looking at graphical applications on commercial letter-forms. Painting skills were being developed by a Year 9 class to be applied to some good observational drawings of plants, composed in the style of Henri Rousseau. Pupils have no opportunity to express opinions about their own work or the work of others, either in written or spoken form. Sketchbooks are not in use for planning, preparing and experimenting with ideas, or for reinforcing and extending previous activities. The portfolios have unfinished work and scraps of paper in them, which does not encourage pupils to take pride in achievement.
- 117 In gathering evidence about pupils at Key Stage 4, it was only possible to observe one Year 10 lesson. Portfolios of current work were scrutinised. The standard of achievement during the lesson was good overall, demonstrating observational and drawing skills working from fruit sections, and graduating the colours in the style of Georgia O’Keeffe. By contrast, the work in the portfolios was generally scrappy, with

poor presentational skills and unfinished work. Some of the work seen was derivative and lacked quality research and preparation, and skills of observation.

- 118 Information and communication technology does not make a significant contribution to what and how pupils learn about art and design and artists. The use is limited to downloading facts and distorted reproductions which do not inform pupils' practical activities in a meaningful way.
- 119 Pupils enjoy their art and design lessons. They listen and respond to instructions, and show respect for the staff and for the resources available to them. There is a good working atmosphere created in the studios, and pupils show a willingness to help each other. They are willing to talk about their work in progress, but have very limited knowledge about artists. They approach their work at a good pace and keep up a good level of concentration in the time allowed. Progress is made during lessons in terms of skill and aspects of developing the technical language of art and design. However, progress is less noticeable over time due to the fragmented way in which art and design lessons are organised in the school timetable.
- 120 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some lessons judged as good. Lessons are planned in great detail, and the studio resources are used effectively in relation to the practical tasks. There is an over-emphasis on skill rather than a balance of approaches to include expressive responses to stimulus. The use of clearly stated lesson objectives and practical demonstrations of techniques ensures that each student knows what to do and how to do it. In a Year 9 lesson the teacher demonstrated how to use sable brushes to control the paint in achieving sharp edges and particular surface effects, reinforcing this with an example of a finished piece that he had done earlier. The pupils were enthused by this and were able to successfully manage the task on their own. In another lesson, a Year 7 class was allowed to handle a range of masks collected from non-Western sources, which gave them a first-hand experience of the different materials used in mask-making which would help them to develop their own images. Teachers give a high level of individual support to maintain pace and interest in the tasks. They establish good relationships with pupils, which helps individuals to get on better with each other. Discipline is effective, with studio routines being clearly understood. There is little opportunity for pupils to respond to and to express personal opinions about art and design and artists and about their own work. Lessons tend to be overly prescriptive, with little opportunity being afforded for pupils to make independent decisions about the content of their work. Marking and target-setting comments are made on the pupils' work, which helps them to understand how to make progress. At Key Stage 3 many of the assessments are generous and do not relate to national standards of achievement for the subject. At present there are no structures in place for monitoring in a formal and constructive way how the curriculum is taught so as to raise standards by improving the quality of education.
- 121 The head of department had only been in post for two weeks at the time of the inspection, and is currently analysing what has to be done to increase attainment at all levels. Many of the policies to guide teaching and learning are incomplete or missing. There is no development plan for the subject to help staff to prioritise initiatives, and identify continuing professional development needs. The capitation allowance is low,

and does not reflect the needs of the taught curriculum in the quality and range of resources. The studio area is badly designed. There is a lot of extraneous noise heard during lessons and the overall space for teaching is not well arranged, much of it being relatively unused. There is nothing planned to ensure that the pupils have the opportunity to visit galleries or to engage with artists in residence to enrich their understanding of art and design in different social contexts.

- 122 Displays of pupils' work within and outside of the studios celebrate a good variety of achievements, often supplemented with plants and made objects for observational work, all carefully arranged. Most displays are supplemented with subject-specific language to help the pupils make connections and develop language skills.
- 123 Since the last inspection the GCSE results have improved slightly, and the subject overall is not now judged to be weak. Expectations of pupils are much higher than they were, and there is much less copying of images from other sources. There is still only limited opportunity for pupils to experiment with ideas and materials, although the challenges are much more demanding and are in line with National Curriculum requirements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching in the majority of lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships.
- Progress of pupils with special educational needs.
- Well deployed classroom support.

Areas for improvement

- Improving the breadth and balance of the curriculum with greater emphasis on designing particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Systems to monitor the effectiveness of the department.
- Better analysis and evaluation of performance data.
- Informative assessment that lets pupils know how to improve their work.
- Addressing the deficiencies in the accommodation and learning resources.

- 124 Overall standards are below those normally found by age 14 and 16. The proportion of pupils achieving A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was 28.2% which is well below the national average for all schools. The difference between girls' attainment and boys' attainment is significant with girls performing less well than boys by nearly half a grade in the GCSEs in comparison to national averages. Pupils in design and technology also performed less well when compared to their attainment in other subjects in the school.
- 125 In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment in Year 9 are below the level expected for pupils of the same age nationally, but this represents a good level of achievement given their levels of attainment when they entered the

school. When designing, pupils are able to use labelled sketches or pictures to communicate ideas, as in the pencil holder project in resistant materials in Year 7. In Year 8, pupils use brainstorming to identify design features of a bird feeder and in Year 9 there is some evidence of simple evaluation being undertaken when pupils are deciding between the designs of mirrors. The designing skills of drawing, product evaluation and analysis are underdeveloped to the extent that many pupils have difficulty in transferring their ideas onto paper with understanding. Where product analysis has not occurred, pupils are unable to justify or evaluate the product against identified criteria. There is also a lack of relevant research to assist the pupils in generating new ideas for their projects. Designing skills are therefore unsatisfactory. When making, pupils are able to use tools with some accuracy, for example, when constructing their hanging baskets and executive toys in resistant materials and sausage-rolls and jam turnovers in food technology. They use a good range of tools and utensils in both media and use them with precision when cutting and shaping wood, metal and plastics in resistant materials and pastry and meat fillings in food. Making skills are therefore satisfactory.

- 126 In the work seen during the inspection, the pupils' standard of attainment at the age of 16 is below that typically expected of pupils of the same age nationally. As with attainment at age 14 making skills are well developed but designing is unsatisfactory. When designing, pupils are able to test and evaluate familiar products, for example, when preparing foods for a children's party or carrying out product analysis on a range of camping equipment in resistant materials. They can generate ideas that draw upon external sources of information as with CD storage racks and dominoes for blind people. There is a lack of relevant research to assist the pupils in supporting the generation of new ideas for their projects and overall communication skills of drawing and sketching are underdeveloped. Designing skills are therefore unsatisfactory. When making, pupils are able to use tools and techniques with a high degree of precision when manufacturing in resistant materials. These are evident in a wine rack and dominoes for blind people. Pupils are also able to adapt their methods of manufacture when something changes in their designs as in the coffee table project in Year 11. Making skills are therefore satisfactory.
- 127 All pupils make steady progress, though better progress is made in acquiring and applying making skills than in designing, particularly when using resistant materials. Pupils can understand how materials can be processed using tools and equipment but do not fully utilise design strategies for communicating ideas and evaluating products.
- 128 Pupils show a good interest in their work and are enthusiastic about working with materials and using tools. They concentrate well on the tasks set, listen attentively to the teacher and work on their tasks diligently. Behaviour is nearly always very good, as pupils relate well to each other and show respect for their teacher.
- 129 Overall teaching is now good. There were many instances of good or very good teaching seen, but there were shortcomings in a small proportion of lessons. Teachers demonstrate a very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject in all lessons. In the best lessons, teachers make use of a well-formulated lesson structure, starting with a clear introduction, leading to practical activities where the teacher provides good support and works with individual pupils to make sure each understands and

makes good progress. In these lessons, the impact on pupils' learning is good as was observed in a food lesson in Year 9 with the pupils making sausage rolls and jam turnovers. Teachers create an orderly atmosphere and have a clear plan of what is to be covered. This is clearly shared with the classroom assistants who are very well deployed and provide excellent support to the pupils. Pupils are managed very well and are kept on task by regular intervention and review of what they are doing, as was observed in a lesson on resistant materials in Year 11 where the pupils were revising computer aided design and manufacture. Teaching of basic designing and drawing skills is less well defined within lessons, resulting in poor quality portfolios of pupils' work. Assessment is neither regular nor consistent and does not provide pupils with clear information about the strengths and weaknesses in their work and how to improve. In the few lessons with shortcomings, teachers are ineffective in their management of pupils and the lesson lacks structure by having no lesson objectives or plenary session leading to frustrated pupils and a lack of progress. There is also insufficient use of assessment in Years 7 to 9 to provide both teachers and pupils with information on pupils' learning as they move from teacher to teacher through the rotational programme of food and resistant materials.

- 130 Leadership and management of the subject on a daily basis are good. This is evident through the very positive work ethos, and through the encouragement and support of pupils during lessons by making use of a new design and technology booklet to help them create a design portfolio. There is an effective development plan with clear success criteria. There is insufficient monitoring of the work of the department, resulting in some weaknesses not being identified and addressed. The assessment of pupils' work is not standardised across all staff. Teaching and learning are inconsistent in quality. External examination results and teachers' assessments are not analysed with a view to raising standards.
- 131 There are weaknesses in the curriculum offered to pupils. A limited range of design and technology experiences is offered to the pupils in Years 7 to 9 and there is a significant limitation to the media options being offered to the pupils in Years 10 to 11. Only courses in food and resistant materials are offered at GCSE level. This does not adequately meet the needs of all pupils.
- 132 The schemes of work lack coherence and progression across food and resistant materials with different styles of layout and content being used in each media. The resistant materials format offers a very good overview of each unit of work and coverage of the programmes of study whilst the food format gives more focus on the individual lesson content. Neither do both which teachers need for consistent delivery of the subject.
- 133 There are weaknesses in the quality of accommodation for resistant materials and food. In resistant materials manufacturing areas are small and become congested when used for full classes. This has a marked limiting effect upon the capability of the pupils to create higher quality products using a broader range of materials in their construction. Large classes represent a possible hazard in these two workshops. In food the area is quite small for larger classes and together with the poor layout and condition of the storage units and work-surfaces has a marked effect in reducing the pupils' capability to extend their skills.

- 134 Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress in addressing a significant number of the areas identified for improvement. Further improvements, to build on progress already made, have been identified during this inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Relationships are very good and lead to good behaviour in geography lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' good knowledge and understanding: the quality of written work, presentation and note compilation are effectively raising standards at Key Stage 4.
- Recognition of the need to address issues of sustainable development is effective in preparing pupils to become good citizens.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, ably supported by learning support teachers.

Areas for development

- Assessment information, monitoring and reporting profiles are insufficiently developed.
- Enquiry, questioning skills and fieldwork are underdeveloped.
- Information and communication technology is undeveloped and insufficiently supports teaching and learning in geography.
- Cultural development is limited and insufficiently connected to the cultural composition of the school.

- 135 Overall, attainment by the end of both key stages is in line with that typically found nationally.

- 136 By age 14, attainment in end of topic and year tests is broadly in line with national standards. Standards have been maintained well since the last inspection. By age 16, in 2001, standards attained in GCSE improved on the previous year, and were above those found nationally. However, this is not progressive improvement, since results have fluctuated over time. Comparison between 1996 and 2001 shows a significant improvement in standard from 24% A*-C to 64% A*-C grades attained; and at no time has the yearly figure fallen below that recorded for 1996. This is a clear improvement since the time of the last inspection.

- 137 Girls' attainment at GCSE is better than boys' attainment, overall. Currently, in lessons pupils are attaining standards in line with those typically expected for their age. Progress in both key stages is good. There is no difference in attainment and progress by gender or ethnicity in either key stage. The progress of pupils with special education needs is very good and their achievement, based on ability, is at least satisfactory. Much credit for this is due to the support of caring teachers and to the focused and greatly valued work of learning support assistants.

- 138 In both key stages most pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of places and environments. Most pupils have a very good factual knowledge and a secure understanding of key concepts. For example, Year 11 pupils can describe and explain a range of features and issues when revising aid and development in a range of countries. In Year 8, they make very good comparisons between the attitudes and values held by farmers and conservationists. Through this study pupils engage in mature and articulate debate of sustainable development issues, focused on the loss of hedgerows in our countryside. A particular strength of learning in geography is the pupils' ability to draw sketch maps and field sketches when investigating the local area of Kingstanding, or when studying more distant places such as India, Japan and Kenya.
- 139 Overall, there is satisfactory development of key skills. Particular attention is given to the correct use of technical geographical words. There are many opportunities in geography lessons for pupils to read aloud and to contribute orally to questions set by their teachers. As a result, speaking and listening are developing very well. In Year 9, most pupils confidently articulated mature responses to a discussion based on the changes in tourist numbers, over several decades, in Mallorca. Pupils use writing frames well to enable them to structure their written work. They make good use of narrative writing and note taking, in both key stages. The skills of descriptive writing, linked to very good field sketches, writing analyses and evaluations for GCSE coursework assignments are developing well. However, opportunities for more frequent extended writing are underdeveloped in Key Stage 3. Good use of storyboards is seen when Year 8 pupils follow the life cycle of a raindrop. As a consequence of all this, the development of the literacy strategy across the geography curriculum is a strength of the department. Numeracy is less well developed. Overall, opportunities for creating and interpreting graphs in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Graphicacy is well developed in GCSE coursework on Burbage Brook, where there are good opportunities to develop and investigate individual enquiries that include measuring, gathering, recording, graphing, interpreting data and drawing conclusions. However, the range of graphs used is limited, overall. The use of information and communication technology is undeveloped. Even so, opportunities to use *Word*, a publishing program and the Internet are used well where pupils in Year 7 type up and present what they know and understand about a chosen volcanic eruption. Databases and spreadsheets are infrequently used. Information and communication technology makes no significant contribution to the quality of teaching or learning in geography lessons.
- 140 A quiet and calm atmosphere in geography classrooms provides an effective learning environment where pupils feel valued, secure and interested in their learning; particularly in Years 7 to 9. This has a positive impact on the quality of learning at Key Stage 3. Pupils' responses to their work are good. Teachers establish and maintain very good relationships. As a consequence, pupils behave well, are courteous and trustworthy. They show respect for each other and geography resources. They value the oral contributions other pupils make to class discussion. Pupils respond well to set routines and the structure of geography lessons. They work collaboratively when required and, at these times, respond well to the challenge set by teachers. They are well aware of what they have to do and

apply themselves purposefully to these opportunities, for example, when Year 11 are expected to consider the most appropriate aid for a range of countries.

- 141 Overall the quality of teaching is good. Teaching across the department is characterised by good subject knowledge, with clear and high expectations for good behaviour. Lessons are well planned and resourced using good quality textbooks, TV and video and revision booklets. A particularly good feature of geography teaching is the way in which lessons are delivered briskly, where teachers set timed activities and provide many opportunities to pause and reflect. This has a good effect on the engagement and interest of the pupils and a positive effect on progress they make in lessons. Where this is linked to group work, pupils working in pairs and class discussion, learning is good. Homework is set regularly and supports and extends work in class well. Time at the end of most lessons is used well by teachers to reflect upon and reinforce what pupils know, understand and can do. This has a good effect on short-term progress and effectively links the learning to the lesson objectives set by the teachers. Teaching is not so good when there is little challenge in the tasks teachers set, especially when teachers are too much in control and limit the opportunity for pupils to set questions that can guide their learning. Enquiry was identified as an area for development in the last inspection. Now, the investigation strand of geography work is developing well. However, teachers answer their own questions too readily, albeit to keep the pace alive, and this limits opportunities for pupils to think about their answers to questions. As a result, this continues to restrict pupils' questioning skills. The emphasis on teacher directed activity limits opportunities for independent learning.
- 142 Teachers keep marking up to date and celebrate success. Although there has been an improvement in the quality of marking since the last inspection, written comments continue to insufficiently inform pupils of geographical weaknesses in their work and do not direct them to the next steps in their learning. Even though the teachers have developed their 'Stairway to Success' they have an unclear view of the small steps that are needed to provide more strategic assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress. Thus assessment insufficiently targets pupils' future learning. This particularly limits the progress made by those pupils identified as gifted and talented. Although results of Year 9 tests are collated and recorded, the overall picture of attainment is insufficiently analysed and therefore lacks the data to inform future planning, establish trends or target learning for individual pupils accurately.
- 143 The provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good overall, while cultural opportunities are under developed. There are limited opportunities to learn from the varied cultural heritage of the pupils and families associated with school.
- 144 Leadership of the department is satisfactory. Action taken to meet the targets in the departmental development plan is good. The geography teachers work well together and there is a shared commitment to improve. Management of geography continues to be good. The head of geography has ensured that the issues raised at the last inspection have been considered and action taken. Clear improvement has been secured on many points. Standards have improved. Opportunities to enhance

and extend geographical enquiry are developing. Funding has enabled the department to improve the range of fieldwork equipment and the department now has a good set of new atlases.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Lesson planning within both key stages.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and commitment to the subject.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of pupils by ages 14 and 16.
- The use of assessment to further support pupils' knowledge of their work and progress in lessons.
- Resources for information and communication technology and their use for enquiry and research.

- 145 The attainment of pupils aged 14 in 2001 in teachers' formal assessments was below the national average with 59% achieving Level 5 and above, compared to 64% nationally.
- 146 Standards reached by pupils aged 16 in GCSE history were well below the national average, though the subject has been followed by only small numbers of pupils since its re-establishment as an option in 1998. In 2000, 41% of the 17 pupils taking the GCSE course obtained A*-C grades, compared to 57.5% nationally. In 2001, the school results from 16 entrants were 25% compared to the national figure of 61%. In terms of A*-G grades, only 87.5% of pupils attained these grades in 2001, below the national results of 97%.
- 147 The quality of work seen in lessons in Years 7 to 9 indicates attainment levels in line with recent teachers' formal assessments. Pupils presently in Years 7 to 9 are achieving levels below those expected for their age, but they are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Work seen during inspection showed satisfactory progress and development, despite the limited curriculum time for the subject in Years 7 and 8. There were weaknesses in the literacy skills of some pupils.
- 148 Pupils by age 16 are achieving standards below those typically expected for their age. By the time pupils reach Years 10 and 11, they have developed a knowledge of their own learning which allows them to demonstrate a more secure grasp of central historical issues with an ability to evaluate available evidence. As in Years 7 to 9, they are frequently confident and willing in contributing to class discussions. More opportunities could be provided for making formal, extended presentations. Contributions in lessons show empathy with people from various periods of time and historical contexts, as in a discussion by Year 7 pupils on life in a medieval town and The Black Death and also in a Year 11 examination of the development of medicine.

- 149 Pupils' achievement leads to sound historical knowledge and understanding which enable the development of individual ability to interpret events with substantiated explanations. For instance, in a Year 10 lesson on the recent history of Northern Ireland, pupils used their good understanding of previous religious, social and political situations to make judgements on actions by the opposing sides and on the linking of events. Pupils with each level of attainment demonstrate essential historical skills of investigation and use of source materials.
- 150 By age 16, achievement is satisfactory when compared with the standards attained by pupils at the beginning of their courses. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. They are also helped to develop by the good learning ethos in lessons, and by the consistent support of classroom assistants. Attention is paid to the rates of development of the most able pupils, but there is a need to provide more challenging work, with extended writing and research opportunities.
- 151 Pupils' general levels of interest and enthusiasm, together with very good relationships and behaviour in the majority of lessons, are major factors in promoting involvement and development.
- 152 Achievement is also well promoted and supported by the good quality of the teaching. During the inspection, teaching in the six lessons seen was judged overall to be good; it was good or better in all but one lesson where it was satisfactory. In half the lessons seen, teaching was very good. The recent development where all lessons are now taught by specialist teachers has raised significantly the success of the subject. Pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied as a result of the teachers' very good subject knowledge and interest. Very detailed planning and structures ensure an established focus in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 9 lessons were helped to develop a clear understanding of the circumstances behind the Nazi persecution of the Jews and the political events which took place in Germany during the 1930s. Setting clear learning objectives and targets for pupils to achieve needs to receive more emphasis. In most lessons, there is a good pace of working through varied activities, with structured writing of notes. Pupils are encouraged to extend their understanding and skills from well presented source materials and worksheets. A recently increased commitment to fieldwork and visits is a further positive element in the activities of the subject in the school.
- 153 The progress of pupils is monitored satisfactorily through the regular marking of their work. The skills and techniques required to achieve each level of attainment within the subject are consistently made clear. Further work is required in relation to the setting of targets for individual pupils and to the assessment of their progress and achievement.
- 154 The quality of teaching in the history department and the progress of pupils owe much to the approach and commitment provided by the subject leader. Planning and teaching strategies have been subject to significant review and development. There is a firm commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils, and to further promoting the popularity of the subject. The present need to increase the availability and use of information and communication technology for enquiry and research

purposes has been recognised.

- 155 Very good progress has been made since the last inspection on each of the areas which at that time gave cause for concern. Management and teaching strategies have received detailed attention, to the direct benefit of the experiences of pupils within the classroom. An overall commitment to developing skills and understanding, the use of sources of evidence and the variety of activities has increased pupils' interest and brought about improvement in attitudes to the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching, particularly in Year 10.
- Pupils' good attitudes to the subject.
- Good accommodation and learning resources.

Areas for improvement

- Leadership and management.
- Co-ordination of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- The use of control technology.
- Schemes of work with an emphasis on the use of information and communication technology in its wider context.
- Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress.

- 156 Overall, standards in information and communication technology are typical of those expected. Since the previous inspection, statutory requirements are now met with pupils being offered a broader curriculum including some access to using information and communication technology for measurement and control.
- 157 Pupils now work across the full national programme of study in Key Stage 3, with standards of attainment meeting national expectations. They are mostly able to use a word processor, spreadsheet and database to present written and numerical information for a variety of audiences and model simple financial information.
- 158 In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils obtaining a pass grade was close to the national average as was the proportion who obtained the higher grades (A*-C). The standards pupils attained were higher than their attainment in mathematics and science and similar to their attainment in English. Girls achieved higher standards than boys although boys did better in this subject than most of the other subjects studied.
- 159 Overall, standards attained in lessons at Key Stage 4, during the inspection were similar to those normally found, but considerable variation occurred. The standard reached by girls is higher than that reached by boys. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons and their learning is supported by effective

learning assistants. The standards reached by these pupils are satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment.

- 160 Overall, the standard of teaching in timetabled information and communication technology lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers plan lessons well, have a very secure knowledge of the subject and give appropriate help and encouragement to pupils. Where the teaching is good, pupils are motivated through clear introductions to lessons, effective demonstrations and the use of question-and-answer sessions which involve pupils more fully in lessons. They also maintain a good pace and balance between time spent in whole class discussions and individual computer practice. Other good characteristics of teaching include the demonstration of practical work using data projectors and strategies for dealing with poor behaviour in lessons. Where the lessons are just satisfactory, teachers launch too quickly into practical work without preparing pupils adequately and have low expectations and slow pace.
- 161 Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and, overall, manage them well, encouraging a positive attitude to the subject through their personal enthusiasm. Pupils generally respond with interest to this approach, are keen to start work and anxious to succeed.
- 162 The quality of learning is satisfactory and sometimes good in Years 7 to 9. The majority of pupils learn to use word processing, publishing, spreadsheets, the Internet and databases well. The work done on word processing and presentations is particularly good. In all three years pupils learn satisfactorily about the impact of computers on society. In Year 7, pupils satisfactorily learn to use databases and word processors. In a good lesson in Year 8, pupils were observed developing slides to illustrate a presentation about their family and interests, producing presentations with a particular audience in mind. This involved the pupils creating slides that combined images with text. Learning is better when previous work is carefully reviewed and when the task is clearly explained. When this occurs, pupils are able to show a clear understanding of the task and a high level of independence, enthusiasm and willingness to improve. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise their English and to learn key words and technical language. The work done on databases involves the satisfactory use of numbers and simple calculations beyond timetabled information and communication technology lessons. Pupils undertake some interesting applications of computer-aided design in design and technology and of computing in science.
- 163 The quality of learning is satisfactory and sometimes very good in Years 10 and 11. In a good Year 10 GCSE lesson, pupils were observed researching tele-banking and the electronic transfer of information. Other satisfactory work observed during the inspection occurred in the GNVQ courses in Year 10 and 11 including the writing of letters, the use of relational databases, the manipulation of images and the preparation of Web pages. On occasion, the main activity lasts too long and pupils' pace of learning slows. Pupils satisfactorily apply computing in some other subjects; examples of its use in design and technology include displaying results of a questionnaire using pie and bar charts, researching topics on the Internet and obtaining digital images.

- 164 The leadership and co-ordination of the subject are unsatisfactory. Departmental documentation, including schemes of work for Key Stage 3, is incomplete and fails to inform current practice within the department. Furthermore, there is little evidence of strategic planning for the use of information and communication technology throughout the school. Assessment is not well enough used to enable teachers to plan learning programmes that meet the needs of all pupils. The monitoring of the experience and progress of pupils using information and communication technology in other areas of the curriculum is not yet fully established. At the last inspection the provision for the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum was judged to be unsatisfactory. Although some subjects are now making limited use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning the provision overall is still unsatisfactory.
- 165 The school has made significant progress with the provision of sufficient, high-quality computer resources. Computer:pupil ratios are better than 1:6. This increase in provision has helped to raise standards in the use of information and communication technology, both in discrete lessons and throughout the school. In science pupils develop an understanding of measurement using sensors. The use of control technology, however, is still underdeveloped due to a lack of resources.
- 166 The network manager and technician make an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department. The technicians also oversee pupils making use of the computer facilities before and after school. This gives many pupils an opportunity to further develop their skills, which accelerates learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The standards achieved by low attainers and pupils with special educational needs by the end of Year 11 are high compared with their general standard of work.
- The quality of teaching by the permanent members of staff is consistently good.
- The head of department has a strong commitment to raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- The percentage of pupils gaining A*-C in GCSE examinations.
- Staffing problems are having a negative impact on standards in some lessons.
- The length of lessons makes it difficult to teach modern languages effectively.

- 167 The school provides a curriculum that teaches French and Spanish to alternate years. At this time there is no opportunity for pupils to study more than one foreign language. At the time of the inspection there were staffing difficulties with a temporary teacher covering a vacant post.
- 168 Standards overall are close to national averages by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11. Pupils enter the school with a level of attainment which is below average so most pupils make good progress.

- 169 In GCSE examinations in 2001 attainment in Spanish was below average. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C was well below average. By contrast the proportion of pupils gaining A*-G was above average. This is significant because the school, unusually, entered all pupils for the GCSE examination. Compared with pupils' attainment on entry into the school this represents at least satisfactory progress for the majority of pupils. Attainment in Spanish was below attainment in other subjects but the difference was not significant. Girls performed better than boys though the difference between boys' and girls' performance was not as great as is the case nationally. The trend since the last inspection is for a general improvement in results both in the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C and in the proportion of pupils entered for the examination, though there has been a marginal decline in results over the past two years.
- 170 Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are improving. By the end of Year 9 high attaining pupils have a secure grasp of the main tenses and are beginning to develop the variety of expression and structure needed to achieve the higher levels. Middle and low attaining pupils have some understanding of tenses but are not yet confident in their use. Pupils develop good listening and speaking skills but do not have enough opportunities to produce extended writing, so standards of writing are not as high. Standards of work vary within year groups, and progress is not consistent for all pupils. Those pupils taught by permanent members of staff have attainment that is in line with national averages and make good progress. Year 7 high attaining pupils develop good speaking skills because the teacher insists that pupils use French to communicate with her; and show good listening skills because the teacher delivers most of the lesson in French. Those pupils taught by temporary and supply staff, generally produce work of a lower standard and make unsatisfactory progress. They often do not develop acceptable pronunciation, and standards of listening skills are below expectations.
- 171 By the end of Year 11 standards are close to national averages. High attaining pupils have a secure understanding of the main tenses and are able to introduce some variety of expression into their work. However, they have not yet developed the skills of manipulating language effectively which will allow them to attain the higher grades. High attainers in Year 10 are, however, beginning to extend the range and quality of their oral and written expression. Speaking and listening continue to be the strongest skills. Pupils in a Year 10 group, for example, were able to have relatively long conversations in Spanish comparing the advantages and disadvantages of travelling by different means of transport. Low attaining pupils in Year 11 spoke with relative confidence while good vocabulary recall allowed them to cope well with a difficult listening comprehension exercise. Most pupils present their work well. Standards and progress, particularly for low attaining pupils, have improved since the last inspection.
- 172 Pupils' attitudes are generally positive. They contribute well to oral activities. They are happy, for example, to perform plays in front of the rest of the class. Many pupils, as in one Year 7 low ability group, show great enthusiasm to join in the lesson. Most pupils work conscientiously on individual tasks and co-operate well in groups. Occasionally the attitude and behaviour of some boys is unsatisfactory. This happens when classroom management is ineffective and in some Year 10 and 11 groups, where

poor levels of concentration lead to minor disruptions.

- 173 Teaching is good overall but there were some examples of unsatisfactory teaching.
- 174 Most teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in using the languages they teach. They use the target language effectively and appropriately so most pupils develop good listening skills. In the small number of lessons where the teacher does not present a good model of the target language, pupils do not develop good listening skills. Teachers plan lessons effectively. Well-structured lessons allow pupils to acquire a secure basis of vocabulary and to develop their skills in speaking, listening and writing. In most lessons teachers have high expectations. In these lessons teachers set challenging tasks to which pupils respond well. High attaining Year 9 pupils, for example, were able to reach high levels for speaking by performing conversations in front of the class without written prompts. The best lessons are characterised by good pace which forces pupils to remain focused on their work throughout the lesson; and by good relationships which creates a good working atmosphere in which pupils feel confident to take risks. Some lessons, otherwise good, lack pace which leads to pupils losing concentration. In other lessons, good teaching would have had even more impact had the working atmosphere been less restrictive. There is a tendency for some lessons to be dominated by the teacher. Unsatisfactory lessons are characterised by inadequate management of pupils and low levels of expectation and challenge.
- 175 The objectives of lessons are always clearly stated in terms of what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. However, review of learning is not always as thorough as it could be. Consequently pupils do not always take away with them a clear view of what they have achieved: and teachers do not always have a clear picture of this achievement which they can use to plan future lessons. Marking of pupils' work is usually thorough, supportive and follows departmental policy. Sometimes marks awarded to pupils are too generous and give them a false impression of their level of attainment. Teachers rarely point out to pupils what they need to do to improve the quality of their work, although there is some good practice in the department. Teachers do not yet have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels and pupils are not involved closely enough in the assessment process. Overall, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- 176 The length of lessons is inappropriate for the teaching of modern languages. It also creates inflexibility in curriculum organisation, which makes it difficult, at present, to introduce a second language for all pupils. The new head of department has made a good start in addressing the issues and problems facing the department and is being well supported by the senior management team. He has a clear view of what needs to be done to take the department forward. He has been successful in creating a good team spirit. Teachers support each other well in difficult circumstances. Revised schemes of work and the departmental handbook have gone some way to achieving a more consistent approach to teaching and learning, but need to contain more detail if this process is to be completed successfully. The department has begun to monitor its performance with the support of the senior management team. Data is being used to analyse pupils' performance and has already led to an understanding of the reasons for under-performance in GCSE examinations. However, strategies have not yet been

sufficiently developed to bring about improvements. The monitoring of teaching needs to be more systematic and its relationship to an effective system of performance management established if the quality of teaching is to improve further. Departmental planning is not yet effective. Measurable targets for development need to be set and priorities established if planning is to have an impact on standards. Staffing in the department is unsatisfactory. There has been a vacancy for a full-time member of staff for eighteen months.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **unsatisfactory** at Key Stage 3. At present there is no provision for music in Key Stage 4. There has been no improvement in overall standards of music attainment at Key Stage 3 since the last inspection.

Strengths

- Lessons are well planned and well taught.
- The head of music always values pupils, treating them with patience and respect and showing a clear commitment to their musical education.
- The head of music has commitment and determination, and an understanding of what needs to be done to improve.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocation for music, well below that required, to ensure that the full range of National Curriculum experiences are covered.
- The lack of sufficient listening and appraising opportunities in lessons.
- Standards of work at Key Stage 3.
- The poor behaviour and attitudes of a significant minority of pupils.
- Assessment procedures with explicit links to National Curriculum attainment levels.
- Resources, including increased access to music technology and information and communication technology.

177 In the recent past there has been insufficient continuity in staffing and as a consequence the musical progress of the pupils has been disrupted. In 2001 no pupils were entered for the GCSE examinations in music and no teachers' assessment of pupils' attainments at the end of Year 9 are available. The present head of department took up post at the beginning of this academic year, on a part-time basis, and since then much has been done to establish the subject and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

178 Standards of pupils' work in music at Key Stage 3 are below national expectations mainly as a result of a lack of consistency in their musical experiences over the past three years, the present two-week timetabling of music, and inadequate curriculum time. Progress during the key stage is poor. At present there is no significant improvement in skills and knowledge between Year 7 and Year 9. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

179 Pupils' music making lacks sufficient expressive quality. Pupils are able to work at a basic level of keyboard skills. Most can compose and play simple short melodies and chord progressions but are not sufficiently experienced in making musical

judgements, in listening to music, or talking about music using a meaningful musical vocabulary. Pupils in Year 9 were observed composing a short phrase to use as a TV theme. Most were able to play the chords with some accuracy but lacked the experience and confidence to evaluate whether their work achieved a convincing musical effect. Pupils in a Year 8 lesson on Indian music improvised using the correct sequence of notes, but their results were mechanical and did not contain any sense of musical style.

- 180 Pupils show higher attainment when engaging in more teacher-directed whole class activities such as singing and performing in a steel pan class ensemble. One Year 9 class made very good progress within one lesson, learning an arrangement of *Love Me Tender* for the steel pans, which they played with accuracy and an enjoyable sense of ensemble. In a Year 7 class pupils sang a set of simple songs with enthusiasm and with attention to vocal quality.
- 181 The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory overall. Lessons contain a well-planned sequence of activities. Expectations of pupils' work were appropriate and clearly expressed, and pupils of different abilities were supported through differentiated work and good teacher support.
- 182 A particular strength was the consistent way in which the teacher valued all pupils, showing patience and a clear commitment to their musical education. In a Year 7 lesson in which many pupils were disruptive, the teacher continued to maintain a calm and caring approach, whilst insisting on good levels of work. This eventually led to some good results both in group performance and in whole-class singing. Teaching was very good in whole-class activities such as singing and steel pan ensemble playing. Here lively and demanding teaching was supported by good subject expertise. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils and teacher worked together with humour and enthusiasm for over an hour. Pupils were enabled to enjoy a real sense of pride in their musical achievement.
- 183 Lessons are mainly teacher-directed. An area for development is the introduction of a broader range of lesson activity so that over time pupils can gain an appreciation of styles and various types of music. Opportunities for pupils to learn to listen and appraise their own and other's music are very limited.
- 184 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are broadly satisfactory although there has been some deterioration since the last inspection. Where pupils' interest is captured, they contribute well and show commitment and enthusiasm. However, where class groups contain a significant number of pupils with special educational needs, particularly behavioural difficulties, and there is no additional teacher support, pupils' behaviour is often disruptive and significantly affects progress.
- 185 Positive attitudes were seen in collaborative group work where simple tasks gave pupils confidence in their own abilities. In a Year 7 keyboard lesson pupils were given carefully graded tasks to learn *Oh When the Saints* and they worked well together. In an extra-curricular steel pan group, the level of pupils' enthusiasm and commitment was very high. However, in a Year 8 lesson, despite good teacher strategies, many pupils lacked confidence and belief in their own ability. As a result,

they constantly interrupted the lesson with silly and often challenging behaviour, and severely disrupted the progress of their learning.

- 186 The quality and range of learning opportunities is unsatisfactory. Allocated curriculum time is at present 2.5%; and this ensures that the national programmes of study cannot be adequately covered and statutory requirements cannot be met. There has been no significant change in this situation since the last inspection. The school plans to provide sufficient curriculum time in the next academic year.
- 187 Pupils are given good opportunities for singing within lessons, and attention is paid to vocal skills. Composing, and performing tasks, particularly using keyboards, are well planned and there are frequent opportunities for collaborative work. There is an adequate range of electronic keyboards and a limited amount of untuned and tuned percussion instruments. However, there is a serious lack of information and communication technology and specialist music software. For this reason as well as that of allocated curriculum time, the department is unable to meet the information and communication technology requirements of the National Curriculum for music.
- 188 The school supports extra curricular instrumental and vocal opportunities; and at present these are available free of charge. Instrumental tuition is expanding. The very limited number of extra-curricular activities is beginning to grow.
- 189 Girls significantly outnumber boys in the take up of instrumental tuition. Around twenty-five pupils take part in extra curricular groups and all of these are girls.
- 190 The recently appointed head of music has made good progress in implementing systems and strategies to improve the quality of pupils' learning and their involvement in musical activities. Planning is generally good but some aspects of assessment especially the recording and analysing of pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels, are in early stages of development.
- 191 Clear departmental priorities and needs are stated in the department's development plan. The head of music shows a strong commitment and determination to improve the provision of music education at the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching by specialist teachers.
- Positive relationships between pupils and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Management of the subject.
- The allocation of teaching time.

- 192 At the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, in the limited range of activities observed, the standards achieved are broadly in line with national expectations. In Year 9 girls' skills in rounders were above the national standard but catching and batting skills are better developed than fielding skills. In Year 9 softball boys are working at levels of attainment below those expected for this age group. They had little knowledge of strategies of the game. In Year 7 swimming pupils are working below the national standard. Although they showed good leg actions they had poor co-ordination of the stroke and breathing techniques. In Year 8 athletics pupils had some knowledge of the technique of shot putting but no understanding of the principles of throwing. In Year 10 in both cricket and rounders pupils showed good batting skills but less well-developed bowling and fielding skills.
- 193 Overall there have been some good improvements since the previous inspection. The attainment levels at Key Stage 4, in the activities observed, have improved. The programme at Key Stage 3 has good continuity and progression with a good balance between different types of activities. However, there needs to be more time allocated to net games. There are no equality of opportunity issues. There are some areas that have not improved. The department's development plan is weak and does not identify or address the key areas for development of the subject. The teaching of more able pupils does not fully meet their needs. The delivery of many areas of the curriculum by non-specialists has not changed and this has a negative impact on pupils' levels of attainment in these activities
- 194 The quality of teaching, delivered by specialists in almost all the lessons observed was good. Lessons are generally well planned and progressively developed, although learning objectives are not always identified and content not explicitly related to previous lessons. The management and organisation of pupils are good and this contributes significantly to pupils' progress. Pupils' receive constant support and feedback on their progress. The relationships between teachers and pupils is positive. All non-participants are effectively supervised and play an active part in lessons. The quality of teaching by non-specialists, although enthusiastic and generally well managed, is less effective and promotes low educational standards because of their limited subject knowledge.
- 195 In all lessons seen teaching was too teacher-directed with not enough opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning through exploration, problem solving, observation and evaluation of their own and others' performance. This means that the four strands of the national programme for physical education are not been fully delivered. Skills are often taught outside the context of the game and there are few opportunities to apply and transfer principles of play across different activities. Activities are mainly planned for the whole class and this results in the more talented pupils not being sufficiently challenged and the less able not been effectively supported.
- 196 The management of the department is weak and does not provide effective strategic leadership. The department handbook only provides a limited framework for the operation of the department. There is no system in place for the monitoring and recording of pupils' progress. There are not enough planned opportunities for the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the personal development

of pupils. There is no systematic risk assessment of all facilities, equipment, changing procedures, practices and activities. The opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities are very limited. There are not enough links with local sports clubs or feeder primary schools

- 197 The allocation of time for physical education at Key Stage 3 is low and very low in Years 8 and 9. When this is linked to the very long lessons, it means that the range of activities offered to pupils is greatly reduced. There is a good range of options offered in Key Stage 4. This enables pupils to study activities in depth and their choices reflect their own skills and interests. Although the swimming pool is a great asset there is limited indoor space and this reduces the range of activities possible. There is adequate space for tennis but the area is underdeveloped and would benefit from external fencing. There are some health and safety risks that require urgent attention. These include covers for tennis post-holes, entrance through the gate to the playing fields, edging on the tarmac area adjacent to the playing fields and the establishment of an emergency link from the poolside. The decoration in the gymnasium and the changing rooms is poor.