

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OUR LADY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105576

Headteacher: Mr A Dolan

Reporting inspector: N A Pett  
17331

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 192101

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:	Alworth Road Blackley Manchester
Postcode:	M9 0RP
Telephone number:	(0161) 795 0711
Fax number:	(0161) 220 5929
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father J Mackie
Date of previous inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> December 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17331	N Pett	Registered inspector		Standards; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13462	R Mothersdale	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How good are partnerships with parents?
31135	R Hobson	Team inspector	English; English as an additional language; Drama	
5985	M Holland	Team inspector	Science	
31100	G Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology; Information and communication technology; Child development.	
15940	N Godfrey	Team inspector	Art	
2198	J Wilson	Team inspector	Special educational needs; Equal opportunities.	How good are learning opportunities?
10316	N Bertram	Team inspector	Geography	
24127	J Kidd	Team inspector	History	
12408	A Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31906	K England	Team inspector	Music	
19295	P Wall	Team inspector	Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd  
7 Hill Street  
Bristol  
BS1 5RW

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated on the outskirts of Manchester, but the area the school serves reaches to the city centre. There are 795 pupils on roll aged between 11 and 16, making it smaller than the average secondary school nationally. The pupils' home backgrounds overall reflect considerable levels of social and financial hardship. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Their ethnic heritage is mainly white European and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs is below the national average. Seven pupils hold statements to address their specific needs. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school, although improving, is well below average. The school receives significant support from 'Excellence in Cities' funding. This school aims to give all its pupils a good education based on its Catholic mission statement, seeking to provide an environment in which pupils can develop their potential as members of both a Christian and secular world and develop their potential as learners.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This school works against a background of social and economic deprivation, with a substantial number of pupils that present challenging behaviour, whose attendance is erratic and whose response to education is often poor. Nevertheless, this is an orderly community. The school cares well for its pupils through its Catholic ethos. Standards are rising. A significant proportion of pupils achieve grades in GCSE examinations which are good in comparison to their previous attainment. However, results are well below the national average. The quality of teaching is good. The headteacher leads the school well. The implementation of some good initiatives to raise standards has been hampered by many changes of staff. The senior management team has been strengthened and recognises that not all initiatives are rigorously monitored. The school gives sound value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Provides effective teaching in the majority of lessons so that pupils learn well.
- Cares well for the individual needs of pupils.
- Effectively encourages the good behaviour and attitudes of the majority of pupils who attend regularly.
- Has good strategies for pupils' personal development, especially for overall guidance and for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities and enrichment overall.
- Links effectively with the community.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards overall.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- Attendance.
- Ensuring that all statutory requirements are met for pupils' welfare.
- Aspects of management, including the role of the governing body.
- The quality of the accommodation.

*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 inspected in 1996 and improvement has been satisfactory. Despite the challenging circumstances, the expectations for the pupils have been raised by the headteacher and staff, although with limited success, illustrated by the low levels of attendance and the attitudes of a significant minority of older pupils. Results have improved and the percentage of pupils who now achieve 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE has increased. The overall quality of teaching has improved and is now more consistent, and there is far less unsatisfactory teaching. This is because there are better structures for monitoring the teaching. Better resources for information and communication technology exist, but are not yet used effectively in subjects across the curriculum. The procedures for assessment are good and there is now

more extensive use of assessment in subjects to set targets and to analyse performance. Attention to the key issues has been satisfactory overall. The limited provision for modern foreign languages and design and technology has not been resolved. The development priorities are clear but more detailed action plans are required to enable progress to be monitored and evaluated. Recent developments have begun to raise attendance levels and behaviour. The potential for further improvement is satisfactory.

## 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	200	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	C	well above average    A above average        B average                    C below average         D well below average    E

In comparison with similar schools, results in 2001 GCSE examinations were average overall, although the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A\*-C grades was well above average. Results were well below average in relation to all schools nationally. The proportion of pupils who are entered for GCSE examinations is lower than nationally because of the high absence rate amongst a significant minority of pupils. There is good added value as most of the pupils who take the examinations do better than expected for their prior attainment, although improvement in average points scores is below the national trend. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 for all core subjects were well below average for all schools, but were above average when compared with similar schools. Results in English were below average, and in mathematics and science, results were well below average. Compared to similar schools, results in English and mathematics were above average, and average in science. Results in these tests have improved at a similar rate to all schools nationally. Standards by the end of Year 9, from work seen during this inspection, are broadly in line with the average in the large majority of subjects, but by the end of Year 11, they are below average. Pupils in Years 7-9 often achieve well and better than those in Years 10 and 11, reflecting the attitudes and poor attendance of a significant number of older pupils, which undermines their opportunities.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils who attend regularly have good attitudes towards their work and teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave well and understand the difference between right and wrong. A minority of pupils do not behave sensibly, but the school is an orderly community overall.
Personal development and relationships	Many pupils enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other. Some pupils are boisterous towards one another, but there is rarely malicious intent or bullying.
Attendance	The overall attendance is poor in relation to the national average, but satisfactory in comparison with local figures. Unauthorised absence is above average.

The judgements are based on the pupils seen during the inspection, the majority of whom enjoy school and work hard. They are proud of their school and willingly talk about the improvement taking place. Their positive attitudes, good behaviour and relationships enable them to achieve well. A

minority of pupils do not respond as well, and exclusions are effectively used to combat their anti-social behaviour.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has shown significant improvement since the last inspection. It is a strength of the school. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching reported at the last inspection has been more than halved, and teaching is now at least satisfactory in well over nine out of ten lessons. It is good in nearly seven out of ten and very good in a significant minority of lessons. Teaching is better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of English and science is good, and mathematics is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory. The teaching of information and communication technology is good in specific lessons, but computers are not being well used in other subjects. Teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, leading to their improving progress. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory as there are shortcomings in the overall planning and deployment of support staff. The large majority of teachers' have good expectations for both behaviour and work, providing a good challenge to their pupils, to which many willingly respond. Good strategies and the good use of resources maintain pupils' interest. However, there is still some underachievement, especially where teaching strategies and work set do not meet the differing needs of pupils.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There are shortcomings in the breadth and balance, as statutory requirements are not fully met in information and communication technology, design and technology and modern foreign languages. This is balanced by the very good extra-curricular provision and the enrichment of the curriculum for learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met but there are shortcomings in overall planning. The deployment of support staff and insufficient monitoring of the provision reduce the effectiveness of the support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is a strength of the school. There are many good elements in the support for pupils' personal development and the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The individual care of pupils is a strength of the school. Assessment procedures are being well developed and the monitoring of pupils personal development is good. Some aspects of health and safety are unsatisfactory.

The curriculum provides effectively for the needs of the pupils in Years 7-9. In Years 10 and 11, there are limited opportunities to provide alternative courses to meet the needs of some pupils who are disaffected. The personal, social and health education course is well structured and the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Assessment is being effectively developed enabling improvements in target setting. Staff training for child protection and the formal recording of health and safety are



unsatisfactory. Links with external agencies, careers service, post-16 providers and members of the Business Education partnership are very good, and valued by the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Good. Leadership by the headteacher is good. He is well supported by his senior staff. A significant number of managers have only recently taken up their posts and they have the potential to initiate further improvement in the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive of the school, but statutory responsibilities are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Test results and national data are well analysed. Targets are set, and monitored and evaluated to gauge pupils' progress and to support the raising of standards.
The strategic use of resources	Financial and human resources are generally effectively used and the school is giving sound value for money.

There is some very good practice in leadership and management at all levels. Clear delegation of management responsibilities exists at both senior and middle management levels. Planning for improvement is satisfactory, although action plans are not always sufficiently detailed. The school is aware of the issues which need to be resolved to raise standards and recognises that monitoring and evaluation require more rigour. Governors are not fulfilling their statutory duties for monitoring the standards and quality of education and for the formal recording of health and safety. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are some limitations in staffing, brought about by the national difficulties of recruitment, and this is having a detrimental effect on the capability of the school to deliver the curriculum. Resources are broadly satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and are making good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations.</li> <li>• How well the school cares for its pupils.</li> <li>• Helping pupils to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The right amount of homework.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information on their children's progress.</li> <li>• The behaviour of some pupils.</li> <li>• Working more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and returned the questionnaire. Inspection evidence generally supports all points that please parents and carers most. Inspectors find that procedures to inform parents about their child's learning are satisfactory. There is a minority of pupils who do present problems because of their behaviour, but, overall during the inspection and from discussions with many pupils, the evidence shows that the school is an orderly community. Inspectors recognise that leadership and management have many strengths yet there are aspects which require improvement. Inspectors consider that the school is seeking to work closely with parents and carers.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. This school is working in challenging circumstances. A significant majority of pupils experience considerable financial and social disadvantage, with a substantial number of pupils that present challenging behaviour, whose attendance is erratic and whose response to education is often poor. The school is situated on the outskirts of Manchester but the area the school serves reaches to the city centre, and this brings significant issues associated with inner urban areas. Whilst a significant majority of the pupils value their school and benefit from their education, the overall value of education for a significant minority of pupils is not a high priority and this can be seen in their approach to school and to learning. This leads to low levels of attendance, disrupting the continuity of their education and hampering their progress. The movement in and out of the school by a minority of pupils during the course of a school year, as their parents or carers move home, also has a detrimental effect on the progress of these pupils and the school's results. There is a minority of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory and they do not gain from their experience in the school. Overall, these pupils underachieve because of the disruption or complete absence of their education, but those who complete their courses do well. The school experiences difficulty in staff recruitment. The difficulty in appointing experienced and specialist teachers is a contributory factor in standards being achieved. Standards are affected by the prior attainment of the pupils on entry, which has been historically well below average. In particular, pupils have low levels of literacy and this affects their capability across the curriculum. Whilst there is not a high number of pupils with special educational needs, reflecting the approach to identifying them, a substantial number of pupils have learning difficulties generated by behavioural and social issues. The overall standards that are achieved are consequently good in the face of this situation. A significant proportion of pupils achieve very well in their results at GCSE compared with their prior attainment.
2. The average points score per pupil in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science in relation to all schools. When compared with schools in similar contexts, based on free school meals, but not taking into account other social issues, results were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Taken together, results in all three subjects were well below average for all schools, but above average in relation to similar schools. Boys' and girls' results were below the national average in all three subjects, although girls performed better than boys overall. The trend for improving results was broadly in line with that found nationally. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was better in English and mathematics than in science. Overall, these results show that there is added value as a significant majority of pupils achieve better than would be anticipated for their prior attainment.
3. In GCSE examinations, the portion of pupils entered from each cohort is below the national average of entry. This is because a significant minority of pupils have poor attendance and have not covered their courses. In comparison with all schools nationally, the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A\*-C grades in 2001 was below the national average, and for 5 A\*-G, and 1 A\*-G, grades were very low. Both boys and girls average points score was well below average and the rate of improvement over the last 3 years has been below average. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls in 2001 examinations. In comparison with school's in similar contexts, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A\*-C grades was well above average, but at 5 A\*-G and 1 A\*-G grades, results remain well below average. The overall points score was in line with the average for similar schools. The targets set for 2001 were not met. In comparison with other secondary schools in the local education authority, the school was in the upper part of the league table. This confirms the inspection evidence that those pupils who attend regularly achieve good results in their GCSE examinations, but there is a considerable number who fail to realise their potential because of their poor attitudes and attendance.
4. Judgements on standards from inspection evidence take into account the pupils who were seen during the inspection. A significant number were absent, and have been absent for some time, and thus no judgements can be made for these pupils. Standards being achieved by pupils

currently in Year 9 broadly reflect previous test results in English, mathematics and science, with continuing improvements. Standards are average in English and science, although still below average in mathematics. These improvements are linked to the effective management and improved teaching. Standards are broadly average in all other subjects by the end of Year 9, except in geography, where there have been significant staffing issues, and in the application of information and communication technology in all subjects. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. Within the option subjects, standards are above average in art and child development, average in all other subjects except in geography and music and in information and communication technology through its use in subjects across the curriculum, where standards are below average. The important factor is that pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory, with it being good in the majority of subjects. However, when judgements take into account the whole cohort of a year group, because too many pupils do not attend or do not give of their best in their work, there is unsatisfactory achievement.

5. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress, as there is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in the provision. Where pupils are withdrawn for support they make good progress, but there is inadequate provision in subjects when teachers do not set work to meet the needs of the pupils or when support staff are unavailable. Pupils' progress then becomes unsatisfactory and this lowers their levels of achievement. Whilst good progress and achievement do occur, for example, in a mathematics lesson, the work is not consistently designed to meet their differing needs and their individual education plans are not sufficiently integrated into the planning for their lessons. Good efforts are made by individual teachers to stretch gifted and talented pupils, but, again, this is not always consistently done. Where they do benefit, then their achievement is good and shown in their eventual success at GCSE.
6. Literacy standards show improvement but still undermine pupils' progress. Speaking and listening skills are average. Pupils speak quite confidently in informal situations. They join in discussions enthusiastically and put forward their points of view effectively, but they rely on a rather narrow range of vocabulary. Most pupils use colloquial expressions very readily rather than more formal language. In formal conditions they are more reticent. Standards in reading and writing are average overall, but there is a significant minority with below-average standards. This reflects the limitations of their vocabulary. Pupils display adequate numerical skills in their work across the curriculum.
7. Overall, standards of attainment are well below national averages, but achievement is good. Since the last inspection, results have fluctuated between different cohorts of pupils, but a significant minority of pupils make good progress, which is a significant achievement when the challenging circumstances in which this school operates are taken into account. The significant turnover of staff, and difficulties in recruiting staff, exert a detrimental effect on continuity of teaching and learning. The effective use of funds from the 'Excellence in Cities' initiative is beginning to have a positive impact on the provision of opportunities and the raising of standards.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

8. The overall attitudes are satisfactory as there is a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The majority of pupils who attend regularly have good attitudes towards their work and teachers, but a significant minority of pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes towards education, reflected in the fact that they do not attend school. Pupils generally feel that theirs is a happy school and would recommend it to their friends. They work well together in groups, as seen in a drama lesson where pupils had to improvise their own school reunion of fifteen years hence; pupils created a wide range of characters with a spontaneous change of dialogue to meet changes in the scenario. Pupils discuss their ideas with confidence and enthusiasm and listen well to each other. For example, when discussing the poem 'Gunpowder Plot', pupils enjoyed the discussion and opportunity to exchange ideas with each other, and this contributed to the excellent learning in the lesson. Pupils are enthusiastic about the certificates and credits they can gain through a good attitude to learning and the majority who are in school are well motivated to learn and participate in the lunchtime and after-school clubs, as seen through their support for musical productions. Most pupils take good advantage of the opportunities provided by the academic

and learning mentors to pursue their studies in school, overcoming practical difficulties to independent learning and research, which may occur at home. Higher attaining pupils respond very well to the structured learning opportunities, but the school remains concerned that a minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a poor attitude to learning, reflected in their attendance record. Nearly all pupils who come to school are proud of their school identity and wear the school uniform.

9. Most pupils behave well and understand the difference between right and wrong. They generally accept the day-to-day rules of the school with grace. One pupil, who had been sent to the behaviour support room, said that, 'If you've been naughty and broken the rules, you have to accept the consequences'. Pupils move around the school in a generally orderly fashion, and although there is some pushing around and boisterous behaviour, it is not oppressive or malicious. Although pupils recognise that there is an element of bullying, it is not an issue that now worries pupils, as they consider incidents are dealt with effectively. There is no evidence of any racial discrimination and the complete ethos of acceptance amongst pupils of their school friends, with no regard to gender or race, is an outstanding feature of the school. A significant minority of pupils do not behave sensibly, but where pupils are disruptive in lessons, the teacher may lack behavioural management skills and the lesson content is insufficiently challenging. Occasionally, some of the more disruptive pupils have special educational needs, and the school makes good use of the Learning Support Unit, the behaviour support teacher and a behaviour support unit to ensure that other pupils' learning does not suffer.
10. During the previous year there were 56 fixed-period and five permanent exclusions, predominantly involving boys, figures which are slightly higher than those found at the last inspection. Exclusion is used to promote high standards of behaviour, and only used as a last resort. Pupils in the Learning Support Unit, who may have been considered for exclusion for previous disruptive behaviour, respond very well to the intensive, focused curriculum on offer, and mix well with other pupils in the school at lunchtime.
11. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall and many pupils enjoy good relationships with teachers and each other. Pupils respond well to responsibility. For example, the house and sports captains in the school are well motivated to set a good example to other pupils in attendance and attitude, having been selected by the Heads of House to demonstrate these qualities to pupils across the school. Pupils are enthusiastic fund raisers for charity; for example, during the inspection, two Year 9 girls coordinated a poster campaign to raise money for a member of the community to visit Lourdes. Pupils also enjoy working alongside the Sisters in the neighbouring convent to find catholic missionary work abroad and in this country. These standards are a significant strength of the school.
12. Pupils are keen to voice their opinion in school and are looking forward to electing a school council as part of the school's forthcoming Citizenship programme. Pupils respond well to outside specialists who talk to them about drugs education. They take a responsible attitude to the dangers of drug taking. When questioning a community police worker on the effects of drug taking, pupils asked responsible, well thought out questions, that acknowledged the threat to their social and academic life that drugs can represent. The Breakfast Club is run, under only minimal supervision, by pupils, and represents an opportunity for teamwork, profit making and study support for other pupils. Relationships among pupils and teachers are good and in most lessons there is a climate of mutual respect and purposeful endeavour. Through the Duke of Edinburgh award and opportunities for work experience placements, pupils demonstrate the responsibility they can take for their appearance, commitment and attendance in the community. Pupils welcome visitors and talk willingly with them.
13. The overall attendance is poor when compared with the national average, but is broadly in line with the area as a whole. Unauthorised absence is well above national averages. The number of pupils with unauthorised absence has dramatically increased in the last school year from a fifth of the pupils in the school to a half of the pupils. The school is working towards an average attendance of 90 per cent. Of grave concern to the school is the fact that Year 10 and 11 pupils have the poorest attendance, and that Year 11 has a very much higher unauthorised absence than any other year in the school, a significant negative factor in the attainment and progress of these pupils. Some of this unauthorised absence is condoned by parents. The last inspection

advocated a change of registration times and, although this was done, the school reports that it has probably exacerbated lateness. Registers are closed a half an hour after school commences, but too many pupils arrive late. Some pupils have to travel significant distances and they face the same transport delays as all other pupils in the city attempting to get to school on time.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good overall, and has shown significant improvement since the last inspection. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been more than halved. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in well over nine out of ten lessons, good or better in nearly seven out of ten and very good in a significant minority of lessons. In a small minority, teaching is unsatisfactory, and very occasionally poor. These lessons do not dominate in any one subject but occur in a very small number of lessons in mathematics, music and modern foreign languages. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In art and English, there is a significant amount of very good teaching. It is consistently good in design and technology, history, physical education and science, and in discrete lessons in information and communication technology. In mathematics, there is a wide variation, from outstanding to poor. In all other subjects there is much good teaching. Teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, leading to their improving progress.
15. The teaching of literacy is good in English, and is satisfactory in subjects across the curriculum, reflecting a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The National Literacy Strategy is being implemented to guide teachers' planning. Some subjects actively promote different writing skills, such as the development of essay writing, note-taking, articles and creative writing. The art and science departments in particular stress the need to write in different styles for different purposes and to use appropriate technical vocabulary. The modern foreign languages department provides opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work. The attention paid to teaching numeracy skills in mathematics lessons is sound and, in other subjects, is satisfactory overall. Some effective work has begun in the use of the National Numeracy Strategy to develop whole school approaches. In science and geography, pupils use statistical information, from which they draw appropriate graphs. In design and technology, a departmental policy statement shows how and when teaching opportunities can add to pupils' progress. In art the pupils are taught to use shape, scale and perspective. The teaching of information and communication technology is good in specific lessons, but teachers are not planning well enough to ensure that computers are effectively used in other subjects. Teaching in subjects across the curriculum is broadly satisfactory, but there are good examples of the use of modern technology. In science, temperature probes were linked to a data logger to record temperatures in a heat transfer. There was also an example of a scanner being used to transfer images from the Internet into teaching aids to support a lesson on adaptation to the environment. In art and geography, computers are used for accessing and using information. The school recognizes that it needs to further develop strategies to improve the quality of teaching of basic skills. Current teaching arrangements for personal, social and health education are satisfactory. The opportunities for pupils to explore, discuss and receive guidance on a range of appropriate topics relating to their personal development and understanding of citizenship are affected by the variation in form tutors' approach. Good lessons were seen but also some which were unsatisfactory.
16. In the best lessons in mainstream classes, there is a good working atmosphere in which learning is good. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations and explain the work very well. Most lessons are well planned and make use of a good range of resources and activities which maintain pupils' interest. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and this allows them to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills through effective questioning and work. A very good example of this approach was seen in history where the teacher's questioning was relentless, and on the many occasions when pupils work in pairs and in groups, teachers spend considerable time visiting the pupils to check on progress and to ensure that new work is being understood and assimilated. This leads to good progress and raises their self-esteem as they realise what they can achieve. Many lessons have good pace. In an English lesson, where Year 7 pupils looked at the difference between formal and informal language, pupils learnt a lot about the appropriate use of different kinds of language because the level of

challenge was high; the pace of the lesson was brisk and purposeful. Time is generally well used. The overall management of classrooms is good. Teachers apply the behaviour code well and they balance this with humour and establish good relationships with the large majority of pupils. This leads to an effective working and learning environment, and when pupils do not respond well, they can be withdrawn from the lesson to the internal exclusion room. When available, learning support staff are effective as they support the overall tenor of the lessons.

17. The overall quality of pupils' learning is good, and reflected in how well many achieve for their prior attainment. They are generally aware of how well they are learning as the use of assessment is sound. In the best practice, teachers use the information from evaluating pupils' learning during the lesson, with marking of completed work and test results to set targets and shape future lessons. There is variation within and across departments, but the developing use of these processes is a contributory factor to raising standards. Pupils enjoy knowing how well they are doing and the challenge contributes to the best lessons being very effective. Marking varies from being exemplary with good comments as to how work might be improved, to some which is cursory. The use of homework is satisfactory and, in the best practice, the work set extends pupils' learning. However, there are instances where homework is set and not completed, which reflects the overall attitudes of a significant minority of pupils and the resources that they have to complete it outside of school. Teachers do well to provide alternative opportunities before and after school, and pupils take good advantage of these facilities.
18. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, teachers plan their lessons so that pupils can understand what is required of them. In these lessons, teachers use strategies that support pupils' learning; for example, a class brainstorm and paired and small group work in discussions. They deploy the support staff well so that they know how best to support the pupils. In these lessons, the learning support staff give good support and make a valuable contribution towards pupils' progress. A significant minority of pupils have learning difficulties brought about by their attitudes and behaviour. Whilst most teachers have sound classroom management strategies, there is a minority who experience difficulty. When this occurs, pupils can be removed from the lesson so as not to disrupt learning for all. They attend an internal exclusion room which acts as a behavioural support unit. Teachers maintain a strict working atmosphere. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is good and this is reflected in the examination results that they achieve. In the best lessons, there is a good level of challenge for these pupils, to which they respond with interest. The work of pupils of all levels of prior attainment is well supported as teachers work very hard by providing extra lessons at lunchtime, after school, on Saturdays and during the holidays. There is a popular mathematics club.
19. Where teaching is less successful, and particularly over time, it reflects problems in the continuity of teaching, teachers' subject knowledge, and planning and class management. In modern foreign languages, geography and design and technology, there have been difficulties in recruiting teachers. Some classes have experienced a significant number of changes, including supply teachers, although the school works hard to alleviate this situation to the best of its ability. Where teachers do not have adequate subject knowledge, their questioning and use of appropriate resources are unsatisfactory. The materials provided for the pupils with special educational needs are too difficult for them to read and so pupils lose interest. In some lessons, the learning support staff have not been given a copy of the teachers' planning and do not know where their support should be targeted. This reduces the effectiveness of the support. Unsatisfactory and poor teaching, which leads to weaknesses in pupils' learning, occurs when lesson planning is not always adequate and the work set to pupils does not meet their needs. On occasions, teachers talk for too long, and this leads to pupils becoming bored and losing their interest. Where expectations are not high enough, for work and behaviour, standards in a minority of lessons deteriorate and pupils have to be withdrawn. Whilst this allows for the rest of the class to be taught, the overall learning is adversely affected.
20. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, reflecting the commitment and use of their skills by many of the teachers, operating in difficult circumstances. Teaching is a strength of the school, a view endorsed by parents.

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

21. The curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, as there is a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good and has been effectively sustained since the last inspection. Because National Curriculum requirements are not met, particularly for design and technology and modern foreign languages, and there are insufficient alternative courses available, there is unsatisfactory breadth, balance and relevance in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Whilst there is equal access and opportunity within the courses offered, it is only satisfactory overall because of the shortcomings which exist. Improvement in this aspect since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, but difficulties in recruiting specialist staff must be recognised.
22. Pupils in Years 7-9 have access to all National Curriculum subjects, and the curriculum is broad and balanced, although there is no provision for drama. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and have a range of option choices. National Curriculum requirements are not met in information and communication technology as not all of the strands are taught within the discrete subject provision. Other subjects do not make sufficient use of computers in their work to ensure that pupils apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in appropriate work. Whilst there has been good progress in improving the discrete provision in information and communication technology since the last report, progress has been unsatisfactory in subjects. It has also been unsatisfactory in addressing the shortcomings listed in that report in design and technology and modern foreign languages. There is inadequate provision in Years 10 and 11 for these two subjects. The school did begin to improve matters, but because it has been unsuccessful in recruiting suitable specialist staff, not all pupils in these two year groups can follow appropriate courses. Within other subjects, the learning opportunities are generally good. A small number of pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum and they are provided with some extended work experience courses. Opportunities for alternative courses to meet the needs of some disaffected pupils and for pupils overall in Years 10 and 11 are limited. The school is involved in discussions for the developing curriculum for the 14-19 age range within the local education authority.
23. There is a focus on promoting literacy skills. The English department is adopting the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy and has plans to develop the recommended techniques further. All staff have had training about how to implement the strategy. The school has recommended procedures for all teachers to follow, such as the display of specialist key words in classrooms and the emphasis on writing for different purposes in different styles. Practice is satisfactory across subjects and teachers, and the school recognises that standards and progress are hampered when staff are not consistently applying the strategy. The strategy is well used in art, science and modern foreign languages. A target group of Year 7 pupils attends literacy Progress Units to improve their skills. Similarly, the Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented with good work in mathematics being supported in geography, history and science, although it is not well embedded across other subjects.
24. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The recent introduction of the 'Successmaker' computer support program is very beneficial in developing pupils' basic skills. The computers are also beneficial in giving pupils access to the Internet for research purposes. Pupils have the opportunity to attend the learning support unit before and after school as well as in the lunch break, and this provides for both personal and academic development. The use of individual education plans and planning to meet the differing needs of identified pupils in mainstream classes is satisfactory, but there is unevenness in the roles of the learning support staff. Examples of good practice are balanced by instances where staff are not well deployed in lessons and are unsure of their roles. There is a good raft of initiatives to support gifted and talented pupils; they are well identified and curriculum support includes residential and extra-curricular activities to support their work. Overall, the school works hard to be an inclusive community and it is successful.
25. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities. It includes a range of subject support sessions and opportunities for homework. There are many sporting activities including competitive fixtures with other schools in a range of sports. Visits take place to Belgium and

Holland for sports tours and there is also a visit to Lourdes. Music and drama work is well supported, as are the many activities linked with the catholicity of the school.

26. The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good, and is a distinctive strength of the school. The curriculum for personal, social and health education is well planned and contains a wide range of relevant topics, including sex, alcohol and drugs education. The teaching of this programme is satisfactory. The school nurse makes a strong contribution to this work, and specialist experts on drugs education support this aspect of the curriculum. There has been a recent audit of provision, which has been used to highlight best practice and inform a review of the programme. As a result, the teaching programme is under review to change from two short lessons a week at the end of the day, to one full-time lesson a week that includes citizenship.
27. A very strong partnership between the school and the local careers service has led to very good provision for careers education, which is well supported by assemblies, residential experiences, work experience and extra-curricular activities. The support provided by the Education Business partnership is of very high quality. Very good liaison and joint planning produce an outstanding programme of advice, practical help, for example, in interview technique and in collecting information, and work-related experiences and opportunities for pupils of all levels of attainment. Introduction to college life is an important part of guidance, and the school has close links to two Catholic tertiary colleges who help pupils with their applications and interviews as preparation for the next stage in pupils' lives. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their work placements and are making very good progress in their understanding of the options available to them after school and in the confidence with which they face the future. The school has ensured work experience support in the school holidays, through the Learning Mentors, for pupils who have missed their work experience placements in term time through absence.
28. The provision for pupils' personal development is underpinned by the very strong spiritual life of the school, and this has been maintained since the last inspection. The school is a worshipping community and its daily work and life are clearly based on the values of the Catholic faith. Many subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their lives and the world around them. For example, in English, pupils explore their feelings and responses to events through texts and poetry and in music, through singing and playing of instruments. Final judgments on the worship and spiritual development of the pupils will be made in the report issued by inspectors from the Diocese.
29. Provision for moral development is very good. Pupils are clearly taught right from wrong and to treat one another with respect. The behaviour policy is consistently operated; there is a clear system of rewards and sanctions in place. Pupils know the consequences if they do not adhere to the policy. Linked with the spiritual development, pupils' values and beliefs are further developed in subjects across the curriculum. In English, history, geography and science, moral and ethical issues are discussed. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities and this is reflected in their care for each other and the school community. Provision for social development is very good. School visits, including a residential weekend to the Lake District, make a vital contribution to this aspect of pupils' personal development. Other opportunities provided include the wide range of sporting opportunities and school productions. Social responsibility to the community features highly and pupils raise funds for a range of different charities. Provision for cultural development is good. The school demonstrates its awareness of the need to develop pupils' understanding of the multicultural city in which they live through contributions in English, music and art and design. Evidence from the diocesan inspector's evaluation shows that religious education introduces pupils to the beliefs and customs of other faiths.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

30. Pupils are very well known as individuals by the headteacher and by staff in general. This is a hallmark of the school as it successfully supports pupils who are experiencing many personal problems. A significant strength of the support are the links with a very wide range of external support agencies. Inspectors met with many of them during the inspection and their overall contribution to the support and welfare of the pupils is very good. They include the police,



psychological service, social services, learning support agencies, careers service and post-16 providers. Assessment is being effectively developed, but in the formal aspects of care, including health and safety arrangements, and training for child protection, there are shortcomings which lead to an unsatisfactory judgement.

31. The procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are satisfactory, with good improvement since the last inspection. There is good use of information and communication technology to record pupils' results in standardized and national tests to predict future performance. Detailed analysis of results against individual pupils' best grades contributes to thorough value added assessment data. This data provides a complete record of pupils' performance and progress and is circulated to all departments and staff responsible for pupils' development. Pupils' understanding of their own performance and what they need to do to improve has been supported by the introduction of the good structures of academic review days, learning mentors and academic tutors. This is good practice, but the data is not consistently used to target high standards by using the information to support curriculum planning, although this has been hampered by changes of staff in middle management posts. The overall system has the potential for further development as subject leaders utilise the data more widely. Pupils complete a Record of Achievement which draws on the assessment data and on records of their personal development, and these are used to form the basis for mock interviews in the Education Business Partnership's Review Days.
32. The identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make satisfactory progress overall. The school has good links with its feeder primary schools and useful information is transferred to help ensure consistency of provision. A range of assessment procedures is used to allocate these pupils into appropriate teaching groups. These are supported by teaching assistants to support pupils' progress. Individual education plans, pastoral support plans and behaviour support plans are all in place, although plans are not sufficiently specific to measure progress. Procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs are not rigorous enough. The use of the plans is inconsistent and the outcomes are not always well recorded. Parents are invited to attend all review meetings, including the Annual Review of their child's statement of special educational needs. Statutory requirements are met. Progress is satisfactory since the last inspection overall.
33. Pupils are well known to the staff and personal support and guidance arrangements are good. Pupils are very well supported on their induction into Year 7 from primary school and this has a positive impact on their attendance and on their learning. The induction procedures continue with a residential trip to confirm the teambuilding that has taken place over the academic year. Links with post-16 providers are very good and there is a comprehensive programme of links with a number of colleges which provide both academic and personal guidance for pupils. Similarly, the links with the careers service are very well exploited for those pupils who seek a career at the age of 16.
34. Pupils are well supported by individual tutors and through a very well structured personal, social and health education programme. It makes an outstanding contribution to monitoring and guiding pupils' personal development and impacts significantly on the school's expectations of pupils' behaviour, attendance, appearance and attitude. Unfortunately, there is a minority of pupils who do not value this provision. The work placement programme is a very positive feature in helping the pupils develop personal knowledge and skills in realistic working situations. Pupils receive good guidance to help them select appropriate placements.
35. The Breakfast Club provides pre-school refreshments for those pupils who get to school early, and also the opportunity to catch up on their homework, research and receive academic guidance. Similarly, study clubs and the Sevens Club, for Year 7 pupils, give pupils the chance to receive extra tuition and get on with their schoolwork, in a relaxed academic environment. Learning mentors effectively support individual pupils, identified by staff, in need of academic, personal and behavioural support. The Learning Mentors' office is well known to pupils, who are encouraged to make contact and seek advice and support whenever they feel it is necessary. There is effective communication and liaison between tutors and Heads of House through formal and informal meetings, resulting in the very good knowledge that staff have of each pupil. Registration periods in the afternoon are used to check homework diaries, follow up

on tutorial and personal issues for pupils, and handing out of general information, but frequently there is no purposeful activity in this time. The school is vigilant in its determination for all pupils to wear the school uniform, and sees this as an important contribution to producing 'citizens of character' in the community.

36. Procedures to monitor and promote behaviour and discipline and to eliminate bullying and oppressive behaviour are good. There are centralised and accurately record details of behavioural incidents that lead to pupils being sent to the internal exclusion room. The Learning Support Unit, supported by an 'Excellence in Cities' initiative, is working well to prevent pupils being permanently excluded from school for anti-social and disruptive behaviour, and to re-integrate them back into school. Within Houses, and under the guidance of the learning mentors, individual behavioural report cards are kept to monitor behaviour and attitudes. The behavioural Support Teacher is used effectively to target classes and pupils in the school whose behaviour is giving concern and affecting the learning of other pupils. The assertive discipline policy is well understood by pupils and applied consistently by staff throughout the school. The effectiveness of this policy, and the appeal of the credit system, which triggers sanctions and rewards, has a positive effect overall on both learning and levels of achievement. Bullying and racial discrimination are not significant problems in the school and the school encourages pupils to speak to staff if they have problems. An accurate and up-to-date exclusion file is kept to record the background and reason for pupils' behaviour that has led to fixed-period and permanent exclusions. Recent initiatives, including the fitting of closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV), has given pupils, especially younger pupils, added confidence and has improved behaviour, as well as combating vandalism and unwelcome visitors to the site. Nevertheless, it is difficult to access information concerning disciplinary matters without going to the individual records of every pupil on file.
37. Overall, procedures to promote attendance and punctuality are satisfactory, but have not led to significant improvement since the last inspection. The education welfare service works closely with the school to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. Information from the pupil registration forms is collated, and these attendance statistics are checked on a weekly basis with the Head of House and the Education Welfare Officer. Too many pupils are regularly late for school and sanctions are applied. However, the organisation, by which one member of the administrative staff records lateness, leads to pupils becoming even later for class because of the numbers. It also hampers early calls to parents to check the reasons for pupil absence. Because pupils in Years 10 and 11 are allowed off-site at lunchtimes without signing out, there no accurate register of pupils on the school premises during this period. In the event of an emergency evacuation during this time, the school cannot accurately report who is on the school premises. The CCTV systems have a beneficial effect on truancy from lessons, as pupils' movements around the school can be observed closely. The school works hard to stress to Years 10 and 11 pupils taking part in the Education Business Partnership initiative that good attendance is a prerequisite of success in the programme. The school also regularly sends letters out to parents asking them not to take their children away on holiday during term time as this has an impact on their continuity of learning and levels of attainment.
38. Whilst action taken to support pupils at risk is good, the overall arrangements for child protection are unsatisfactory. This is because there has been no recent training for staff, and most importantly, not even for the designated member of staff. The staff handbook states that any concerns must be referred to the designated person, but has no information on direct referral procedures in an emergency. The day-to-day management of health and safety is mainly satisfactory. The procedures are carried out to a satisfactory standard in departments such as design and technology, science and physical education. Vigilant caretaking ensures that fire alarms are checked regularly, but fire drills are only held on an annual basis, despite the school's policy stipulating a termly drill. The formal recording of the full range of risk assessments, ensuring that all appliances are checked on an annual basis and involving the Governing Body in a formal audit of the health and safety of the school, is unsatisfactory. There are four qualified first aiders in the school, and the school nurse not only provides valuable health expertise to areas of the curriculum, but also operates a confidential drop-in service for pupils on a weekly basis.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

39. Only 14 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting, and a small minority returned the questionnaire. From this limited evidence, parents' views of the school are generally good and more especially, overwhelmingly good of the headteacher. Generally, parents feel comfortable approaching the school to ask questions, judge teaching to be good and are pleased that the school has high expectations of their children. What concerns parents most is the poor behaviour of some pupils. Overall, parents do not make a strong voluntary commitment to the school, and membership of the school's Parents/Teacher Association has diminished in recent years as many parents shunned social activities organised by the association. However, the association has been a successful fundraising group in the past, and is participating in fundraising for the school's Sports College bid. Many parents are employed by the school in a variety of jobs and the school makes regular surveys of their viewpoint to guide and inform certain school decisions, or to assess the success or failure of a specified action.
40. Only about half of the parents and carers eligible attend consultation evenings, and this robs the school of the chance to inform and consult with them on their child's progress. The greatest concern is the lack of support received in promoting attendance, and the perception is that a significant number of parents do not value education and pass this attitude on to their children. Many parents do not give the school reasons for their child's absence, or condone it, and this boosts the school's number of unauthorised absences. Approximately one per cent of all the absences from school are where parents take their children away from school for a holiday in term time.
41. Information to parents is satisfactory overall. There are regular newsletters to families and annual written reports to parents meet statutory requirements and inform parents of their children's National Curriculum levels and targets. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The house system establishes strong links with families, especially by ensuring that all siblings are placed in the same house to ensure a cohesive partnership with parents. Good links exist with home to keep regular contact with parents, for example, to ask about a pupil's absence, or to discuss a pupil's behavioural problems, or where homework is not being completed. Much of work is done through the form tutors, helping to build a strong partnership between home and school. Where the school assesses that specialist help or guidance is needed for a pupil, for example, to seek extra therapy or learning support, it regularly invites parents to talk through different ways of helping pupils to find the right learning or behavioural provision. Careers information to parents is detailed and well organised and helps parents in guiding their children to making an informed choice about which GCSE subjects to follow.
42. The school provides a well-directed guide to parents on supporting their children's GCSE coursework, and maximising the help they can give their children. It expects parents to check and sign their children's homework diary each week. The statutory Home/School agreement does not operate well and prevents monitoring how many of its parents are agreeing to support pupils' work at home. Parents are asked to contact the school if they feel their child is not being set homework on a regular basis, and from the results on the parents' questionnaire, the amount of homework given to pupils is a concern to a small number of parents. Inspection evidence supports this view. Learning mentors in the school are an important link with parents, especially for those pupils with learning barriers or behavioural concerns. They work with parents to raise pupils' standards and improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

43. The school's aims are set in its catholic tradition and are very well met in this context. The aims, to enable pupils to develop their potential and to achieve academic success, feature strongly in the work of the school, but are not met as successfully. This is because of the challenging circumstances in which the school operates, and especially because of the low attendance levels of a significant minority of pupils. There is a very strong commitment on the part of the governors and the very large majority of the staff to improve the overall quality of education and standards of the pupils.

44. The headteacher leads the school very well, giving good educational direction, and works effectively within the constraints of staff recruitment and retention and the social issues which pervade the area. He is totally committed to the school and his work over the last fifteen years has been one of the main reasons why the school has been able to meet the needs of its pupils. He is very experienced and knows the pupils exceptionally well. The partnership with his senior colleagues is good and they also work very hard to maintain the quality of education. The management of the school is satisfactory, as is improvement since the last inspection, representing a balance of strengths and weaknesses. This is because of the many changes of senior and middle managers over time. There are examples of very good management practice amongst the senior staff and subject leaders, but there are also aspects which require improvement. The senior and middle management staff have been strengthened by recent appointments. Senior staff have tasks delegated to them, for example, curriculum, pastoral care, and teaching and learning. Much good work has been done in ensuring that initiatives are effectively implemented but the overall monitoring and evaluation by the senior staff is not consistently rigorous. Because of the changes in subject leaders, the pace of change has been limited as these managers have not yet had the time to fully implement initiatives and to establish a consistent monitoring process for the work of their own areas. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching has improved and is now more consistent, with far less unsatisfactory teaching. Targets set for examination results in 2001 were not met. Since the last inspection, the percentage of pupils who now achieve 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE has slightly increased, and the expectations for the pupils have been raised. Leadership and management of the special educational needs department are satisfactory. It is managed by a long-serving teacher, who has recently led a review of the department, leading to a significant investment in computer support and in learning support assistants. However, the overall planning and monitoring of the provision have shortcomings.
45. The governing body is very committed and strives well to fulfil its duties, although recruitment of governors has been difficult and there are several unfilled vacancies. Governors benefit from the headteacher's detailed reports to support their monitoring of the standards and quality of education. The headteacher has operated in a style to relieve pressure on governors and, whilst the governors are very supportive of the school and involved to the best of their ability, they do not fulfil their statutory duties and this is unsatisfactory. National Curriculum requirements, the formal recording of health and safety, and child protection arrangements are not met. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses in relation to standards and social issues. Some links exist with departments and visits to monitor activities take place.
46. Governors are insufficiently involved in development planning and shaping the future direction of the school. The school development plan is a succinct document showing the priorities for a two year period. It lacks sufficient detail to ensure that action plans can be adequately monitored and is insufficiently strategic. The issues in the plan are well understood and responsibilities are well delegated to senior staff, and they make good progress in the developments. Governors monitor spending and there is efficient administration of finances. Significant amounts of financial support are received through the standards funds and through 'Excellence in Cities' initiatives. These are well used, for example, in providing learning mentors and support staff. Financial links with the development plan are satisfactory and targeted for improvement. The governors, through the senior staff, apply the principles of best value as they seek to obtain the best possible opportunities for the pupils. This is illustrated in resources for information and communication technology, special educational needs and the safety of pupils through the CCTV system. The amount of funds held for contingency is appropriate and, whilst a deficit budget has been set, it is expected to broadly balance when accounts are finalised. To further enhance opportunities, the school is structuring a bid to become a Specialist Sports School. Taking into account the standards and the added value being achieved by many pupils, the quality of teaching, and the contribution to the personal development of the pupils, the school is giving sound value for money.
47. There is a significant proportion of well-qualified and experienced staff, and some less experienced and younger teachers. They generally meet the needs of the curriculum, but there are shortcomings in modern foreign languages and design and technology. There is a significant problem in recruiting and retaining staff because of the school's difficult circumstances. This leads

to the need for supply staff. The match of learning support staff is sound. The professional development of teaching staff is good and meets the needs of the school and the professional needs of the staff. Further work is required to address how pupils with special educational needs are catered for in mainstream classes. Effective training is provided for support staff. Performance management is in place, and the induction programme for new staff is good.

48. Whilst many classrooms are appropriate, and a comparatively new building provides good accommodation, the accommodation is unsatisfactory for the needs of the curriculum overall. There are significant issues in science where laboratories are in need of refurbishment. Facilities in art and drama are in need of extension and refurbishment and outdoor facilities for physical education are poor. Facilities for dining are very limited and there are no social areas for pupils. The library is small but is well stocked and operated. The spread of building across the site raises significant issues for movement, especially in wet weather. It also means that some pupils have a considerable distance to walk between lessons, which exacerbate lateness. A number of footpaths and hard play areas are hazardous, partly brought about by repairs to the main water supply pipe for parts of Manchester that runs under the school playground. This has caused significant problems in the past when it has been in need of repair and caused flooding. Many corridors and staircases are small and access for physically disabled pupils is poor. The school entrance is welcoming, with many trophies and other rewards which celebrate pupils' achievements. Staff do their best to make the school attractive through effective displays, which do much to raise pupils' self-esteem, but the overall fabric is tired and this does not encourage pupils to care for their environment. That they do so is a credit to the catholic ethos of the school, although there is a significant amount of litter but little graffiti. The caretaking and cleaning staff work tirelessly and keep the school very clean.
49. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. There are shortfalls in English, science, design and technology and music, but in other subjects they are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The ratio of computers to pupils is sound, with good improvement since the last inspection. The quantity and quality of books in the library are satisfactory and there are good computer facilities, both of which are well used. The overall use of resources is good.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

The governors, headteacher and staff now need to:

- i. Raise the standards being achieved by pupils overall by:
- improving the teaching of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology;  
*(paragraphs 1, 6, 15, 23, 55, 57, 58, 59, 66, 68, 71, 72, 83, 96-99, 100, 103, 107,110, 117, 122, 128, 130)*
  - improving the work set in a minority of lessons to meet the differing needs of pupils consistently;  
*(paragraphs 5, 19, 24, 53, 64, 72, 114, 122, 129)*
  - ensuring statutory requirements are met for information and communication technology, design and technology and modern foreign languages;  
*(paragraphs 21, 22, 45, 84, 89, 112, 116, 124)*
  - improving the monitoring and evaluation of whole-school initiatives so that senior staff are rigorous in their work and that initiatives are consistently followed;
  - improving the leadership and management roles of heads of department to ensure that they monitor and evaluate the work in their subject areas with close reference to senior staff link managers;  
*(paragraphs 31, 32, 44, 56, 67, 75, 88, 101, 115)*

- improving the role of the governing body so that they fulfil their statutory duties and effectively monitor the quality of education and standards;

*(paragraph 45)*

- improving the attendance of all pupils by:
  - better use of modern technology for recording absence;
  - ensuring that contact with parents is as early as possible;

*(paragraphs 13, 37)*

ii. attend to shortcomings in the care of pupils by:

- ensuring that statutory requirements are met for health and safety through the formal recording of all risk assessments;
- ensuring that up-to-date training for child protection is implemented;

*(paragraphs 30, 45, 38)*

iii. continue to seek ways to improve the quality of the accommodation, particularly in science, drama, art, physical education, and in dining and social areas.

*(paragraphs 48, 74, 76, 81, 139)*

Other issues:

- Continue to develop the good procedures for assessment to further support target setting and achievement.

*(Paragraphs 31, 69, 80, 88, 101, 115, 123, 129)*

- Improve the provision for drama for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

*(Paragraphs 22, 93-95)*

- Address resources issues in subjects where there are shortcomings.

*(Paragraphs 17, 19, 56, 75, 88, 106, 131)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	117
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		36

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7-11</b>							
Number	4	14	62	30	5	2	0
Percentage	3.5	12	53	26	4	1.5	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	795	n/a
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	389	n/a

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	77	n/a

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

### Attendance

<b>Authorised absence</b>		<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	
	%		%
School data	14.9	School data	3.2
National comparative data	8.1	National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	92	76	168

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	40	35
	Girls	46	41	34
	Total	73	81	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	44(61)	49(53)	41(44)
	National	64(63)	66(65)	66(59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17(18)	25(32)	10 (15)
	National	31(28)	43(42)	34(30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	20	43	40
	Girls	36	43	38
	Total	56	86	78
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	35(54)	51(55)	46(58)
	National	65(64)	68(66)	64(62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20(17)	17(26)	20(27)
	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	79	74	153

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	25	49	64
	Girls	29	57	64
	Total	54	106	128
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	35(29)	69(72)	84(83)
	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	27.5
	National	39

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	15
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	7
White	761
Any other minority ethnic group	7

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	55	5
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)	48
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

#### **Education support staff: Y7– Y11**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	315

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	24.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2122462
Total expenditure	2064463
Expenditure per pupil	2562
Balance brought forward from previous year	36665
Balance carried forward to next year	57999

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	795
Number of questionnaires returned	42

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	36	10	5	2
My child is making good progress in school.	40	55	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	40	10	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	50	0	0	5
The teaching is good.	50	45	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	40	10	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	31	2	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	33	45	12	2	7
The school is well led and managed.	64	31	2	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	38	5	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	24	10	0	7

Only a minority of parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and returned the questionnaire. *Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages as each questionnaire return represents more than two percentage points.* Inspection evidence generally supports all of the points that please parents and carers most. Inspectors find that the setting of homework is sound and that procedures to inform parents about their child's learning are satisfactory. Inspectors do consider that the school is seeking to work closely with parents and carers. There is a minority of pupils who do present problems because of their behaviour but, overall, during the inspection and from discussions with many pupils, the evidence shows that the school is an orderly community. Inspectors recognise that leadership and management have many strengths but there are aspects which require improvement.

## PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Results in National Curriculum tests are above those of similar schools.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils' work is helpfully marked.

#### Areas for improvement

- Further developing techniques recommended in the National Literacy Strategy.
- Opportunities for pupils to use computers.
- Further develop procedures for monitoring and evaluating lessons.

50. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year olds in 2001 were below the national average, although above average for similar schools at the expected levels. Results in mathematics and science were below those in English. When pupils come into the school, their attainment levels are well below the average, so this means that they achieve well during their first three years. The attainment gap between boys and girls is similar to that found nationally, with girls outperforming boys. GCSE results at A\*-C in English in 2001 were in line with the national average, although the percentage of pupils entered for the examination was a tenth less than the national entry, brought about by the high absence rate of a significant minority of pupils. The English literature results were better than national figures, although, as in English, the percentage of the year group entered was less than that found nationally. The trend has improved over time in English literature. Girls achieve better than boys by a similar margin to that found nationally. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, results in both English and English literature represent good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
51. Standards achieved by 14-year-olds during the inspection are in line with the national average and slightly better than previous test results. This change reflects the continuing improvement of teaching. Higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 9 write detailed, technically accurate pieces. They can adapt their writing effectively for different situations and readers and learn basic techniques of literary analysis. For example a good range of writing in Year 9 work included very good analysis of advertisements, with pupils pinpointing the persuasive techniques used by advertisers. Some good writing was also seen from a pupil putting forward her views about society's responsibilities to the elderly. Average and lower attaining pupils develop their ability to write for different readers and purposes, although their writing lacks detail and, sometimes, technical accuracy. They can make straightforward judgements about writers' intentions. Higher attaining pupils can express their ideas confidently when speaking in different situations and use varied vocabulary, although average and lower attaining lack confidence in expressing their views, particularly in more formal circumstances.
52. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are generally average, although there is a significant group of pupils whose poor attendance means that they are not entered for any examination. No judgements can be made about their standards. The majority of pupils employ skills of literary analysis well and higher attaining pupils write extended pieces accurately in a lively and imaginative way. These pupils can use textual quotations well and they enjoy studying literature. In interesting essays on 'Macbeth' and Arthur Miller's 'A View from a Bridge', pupils used the language of literary analysis accurately and quoted appropriately from texts to illustrate their views. Above average pupils express their views orally quite confidently and use a reasonable range of vocabulary, although there is generally an over reliance on colloquial expressions. The work of average attaining pupils displays some of these qualities but their levels of vocabulary, and oral and written skills, lower their overall standards, as is the case for pupils of low prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, from entering the school until they are sixteen. Those who are particularly talented in English make good

progress. Inspection evidence showed no difference in achievement between boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Overall, all pupils achieve well for their prior attainment.

53. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good overall. When lessons are good or very good, teachers plan for a variety of tasks and activities and the pace is brisk, maximising use of available time. In one very good lesson, Year 7 pupils looked at the difference between formal and informal language. Pupils learnt a lot about the appropriate use of different kinds of language because the level of challenge was high, the pace of the lesson was brisk and purposeful and the lesson was planned to include a range of activities to keep pupils motivated and on task. Another lesson saw Year 11 pupils revising the use of symbolism in a selection of short stories in preparation for their GCSE exam. The teacher's very good subject knowledge, together with her high expectations of what pupils could achieve in the lesson, enabled very good learning to take place. Lowest attaining pupils do not always have their range of learning needs sufficiently catered for and there are some lessons where there are limited opportunities for pupils to work independently or collaboratively.
54. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils who attend lessons are good, and quite often very good. Pupils listen well and take the subject seriously. Relationships among pupils and with teachers are good and there is a climate of mutual respect and purposeful endeavour. There is, however, a substantial minority of pupils who are regularly absent and at the end of Year 11 are not entered for any examination in English. This number is greater than that found nationally and is a cause for concern.
55. The department has started to use performance data to assess how both individuals and groups of pupils achieve. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly giving helpful development points and recognising good work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 usually know what National Curriculum level they are currently working at, as indeed Years 10 and 11 know which GCSE grades they are aiming for, their current performance level and targets for improvement. The Certificate of Achievement is provided as an appropriate alternative examination for a small group of Year 11 pupils. The department has rewritten the schemes of work for Year 7 in the light of the requirements of the literacy strategy and is moving on to look at those for Years 8 and 9. Although computers are used to support learning, particularly as a tool for redrafting work and for research purposes, practice is inconsistent and this limits pupils' opportunities to improve their standards. Pupils are introduced to linguistic and literary analysis effectively. Teachers make good use of opportunities for promoting moral and spiritual values through discussion, writing and the study of literature.
56. The department is well led and managed. Teachers work effectively together as a team. The head of department has an analytical, reflective approach to assessing how well pupils are doing and in highlighting what needs to be done to raise standards. Performance data is being used to set targets and this continues to be a development area. The department has clearly defined priorities and is focused on enabling pupils to achieve their potential. There is monitoring and observation of lessons for Performance Management purposes, but this process could be extended to sharpen practice in lessons even further. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although several of the classrooms are adequate, the library is regularly used for lessons, making it unavailable for other use, and one classroom is much too small for the size of classes that use it.
57. Advancing pupils' literacy skills has been identified as a priority and staff have worked hard to do this successfully. Whilst teachers of English are instrumental in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject-specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically.
58. The department has made good progress since the last inspection on most of the major issues that were identified. It has introduced the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy and this is starting to have a positive impact in improving pupils' literacy skills and raising standards. The department is well placed to improve even further.

## Literacy

59. The overall standards in literacy hamper pupils' achievement overall. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are broadly average for their ages. They speak quite confidently in informal situations and join in discussions enthusiastically and put forward their points of view effectively. In more formal conditions they are more reticent and, although higher attaining pupils still express their ideas successfully in such circumstances, others are sometimes reluctant to develop their points and rely on a narrow range of vocabulary. Most pupils use colloquial expressions very readily rather than more formal language. Standards in reading are broadly average overall, but mask a significant range of skills. Higher attaining pupils effectively read a variety of different kinds of text for different purposes and extract and synthesise information from what they read. Other pupils read with less assurance and can interpret what they read in a straightforward way, often encountering difficulty in pronouncing some words and understanding what they read. Standards in writing are broadly average overall, although the standards reflect those found in speaking and reading. Again, whilst higher attaining pupils write well for a range of purposes, the limitations of vocabulary and style undermine standards for other pupils. The development of literacy in subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory and is achieved by promoting different writing skills, such as the development of essay writing, note-taking, articles and creative writing. Effective work was seen in the development of technical language in art to help pupils develop the skills of critical analysis and by the science department in promoting different kinds of reading and writing, and to use appropriate technical vocabulary. The modern foreign languages department provides opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces throughout the school. The school recognises that literacy is hampering pupils' standards and has effectively implemented the National Literacy Strategy in Key Stage 3. Further work is needed to ensure that all staff consistently promote pupils' literacy as a key to raising standards.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Results in National Curriculum tests are above average in relation to similar schools.
- Quality of teaching in Years 7-9.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Raising standards.
- The use of information and communication technology.

60. Attainment on entry is well below average. Most pupils who attend regularly make at least satisfactory and often better progress across all years because of the sound quality of teaching. Results in the National Curriculum tests for fourteen year olds in the year 2001 were well below the national average, but above average in comparison with similar schools. Over the years between 1999 and 2001, results were below national averages and suffered a big drop in 2001 following a period of steady improvement from 1997 to 2000. The setback occurred because of staffing problems that have now been resolved. There is no marked difference between the performance of boys and girls. GCSE results in 2001 were below national averages for pupils scoring between A\* and C and for those obtaining a grade G or higher, but showed above average improvement for the pupils from their results in national tests two years earlier. Compared with similar schools the results are well above average. Results were below those achieved in English and science.
61. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average, showing some improvement over previous tests results. About half of the pupils in this year group are achieving at or above the expected National Curriculum level, with the majority of those in the top sets producing work which is above average and reflecting the higher levels. This is in line with the school's test targets for this year. Higher attaining pupils have reasonable algebraic skills but middle attainers find it difficult to express simple statements such as one boy has four more counters than another in

algebraic terms. Many experience difficulties when working with decimals. Most of the lower attaining pupils can recognise the difference between odd and even numbers, although they experience difficulty when calculating prime numbers. Long multiplication is a weakness for many pupils. Some make errors of scale when drawing up axes for a graph.

62. Standards by the end of Year 11 are below average, with just about four in every ten showing the capacity to obtain grade C or better at GCSE. Very few high attaining pupils are on course for the highest grades A\* or A at GCSE. This is in spite of the fact that almost all of the top set entered the examination early and achieved a grade C or better in Year 10. Higher attaining pupils can factorise quadratic expressions and some can solve quadratic equations by completing the square. Middle attainers can draw a cumulative frequency graph, although some do not always choose the best scale for its axes. Most pupils can calculate accurately in addition, subtraction and multiplication of vulgar fractions, but make mistakes when carrying out division. When handling transformations, they make errors, in part because some teachers do not make enough use of the overhead projectors available to them to provide a more visual approach 30 per cent or 70 per cent of an amount. Pupils' achievement shows significant added value as they achieve much better than would be expected. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is similarly affected by absence and therefore unsatisfactory.
63. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The pupils' learning is closely linked to the quality of teaching and is satisfactory overall. Lessons follow the three-part structure recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy. They begin with a short introductory activity, followed by a longer period for the pupils to work on the main topic for the day. The lesson usually ends with a review of what has been covered. The introductory sessions are effective for the most part, although some did not involve enough short sharp questions practising mental methods. The use of small individual white boards so that all pupils can display their answers to the teacher is effectively employed by many of the teachers.
64. Almost all teachers are specialists in the subject, which is a marked improvement since the last inspection when staffing was identified as a weakness. Thus, in almost all lessons, pupils benefit from a well informed and rigorous approach to their work. Teachers manage the pupils well. Most lessons move at a good pace holding the pupils' interest and encouraging them to work hard. In the best lessons, the teachers challenge the pupils to think about their work and how it can be improved. This was exemplified in an excellent Year 10 lesson during which the pupils reviewed what they knew about angles. By contrast, in a minority of lessons, including an unsatisfactory lesson, the teachers had not prepared well enough and the amount of ground covered was insufficient. The pupils were well controlled and worked quite hard, but were not subjected to enough challenge. The teachers talked too much and the pupils spent too much time working on and through very straightforward examples which, whilst providing a measure of difficulty for some, did not extend higher attainers. Marking is generally good. Teachers comment fully on how work might be improved, making good use of the school's reward system to motivate the pupils to do better. However, pupils are not always sufficiently involved in setting their own targets for improvement.
65. The teachers work very hard outside of class providing extra lessons at lunchtime, after school, on Saturdays and during the holidays. There is a popular mathematics club. Each week the head of department sets a problem in mathematics as a challenge for the school at large which is enjoyed by some staff as well as many of the pupils. Pupils behaved well in almost every lesson seen, even when the teaching was not sufficiently challenging. Relationships between pupils and between the pupils and their teachers are good and contribute strongly to the pupils' learning. The attitudes of those who attend are positive, but poor attendance of a significant minority in many lessons reflects an unsatisfactory attitude to work overall. This has a significant effect on the learning of those who attend as well as those who do not, because of the extra burden it places on the teachers. Pupils do not always correct their work.
66. Information and communication technology was an area requiring improvement in the last report. There has been satisfactory improvement, although its use remains unsatisfactory. References to the use of computers are now included in the schemes of work and the teachers have received computer specific training. Computers are used, but the overall application of skills within pupils' work is uneven and the reliance on pupils using their own computers at home

disadvantages those who do not have such access.

67. The department is well led by a very talented teacher who is used by the local education authority as an exemplar and trainer for others. She has dealt with some difficult staffing issues during her short time as a head of department and has gained the trust and support of her staff. They are strongly committed to improving the pupils' standards and confident that they can secure that improvement. She has rightly identified the major areas for development as integrating assessment of pupils' work into the schemes of work, increasing the use of national and pupil data to evaluate the department's performance more rigorously and formalising monitoring of the teachers' marking and record keeping. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Areas of concern have been addressed and, whilst examination and test results are below average, they have improved in relation to similar schools. The department is now better placed to advance and improve.

### *Numeracy*

68. Pupils display adequate numerical skills in their work across the curriculum. The attention paid to numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. Some useful work towards developing a whole school approach to numeracy has begun. In geography, pupils use statistical information to consider demographic changes, climate statistics, and in their map work and in compass bearings. They draw graphs of land values. In history, they use information taken from eighteenth century parish records to find trends in the causes of death and then produce bar charts and pie charts to demonstrate their findings. In art, the pupils are taught to use shape, scale and perspective and there are mathematical references to the work of artists such as Escher and Mondrian. In science, the level of numeracy skill correlates well with their ability and age, as pupils are taught to interpret graphs representing distance and time, velocity and time in solving problems involving motion.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in for science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Good teaching.
- Curriculum organisation.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of information and communication technology.
- The quality of accommodation and resources.

69. On entry at age eleven, standards are well below the national average. The majority of pupils have difficulty in writing and with number work and some have limited experience of investigations. This has an adverse effect on progress. Results in 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average in relation to all schools and average when compared to schools in similar contexts. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was below average. Results were slightly lower than those achieved in English and mathematics. In the past three years standards at 14 have fallen when compared with national trends. Fewer pupils took the national tests in science than in English and mathematics due to absence and this has affected the overall results.
70. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were below the national average at A\*-C grade when calculated across the year group. However, when compared with the number of pupils who completed the coursework and sat the examinations, these rise to being similar to the national average with a good number of pupils achieving the highest grades. Nearly all pupils taking the Double Award (which is about the top third of the year group) obtain grades higher than C and pupils taking the single award obtain mainly C grades and lower. This is partly accounted for by the setting arrangements and entry requirements for taking the Double Award course. When



results are calculated on the number of pupils who complete the assessments and examinations, there is a much more positive picture and results compare well with national averages. Similar results have been obtained in the past three years and girls and boys do equally well. A small number of pupils on the Double Award take a single subject science a year early which increases motivation. Pupils who attend regularly do well and make significant progress from age eleven, but there are a significant number of pupils who have poor attendance and do not gain a qualification in the subject. The GCSE grades achieved by pupils in science are higher than in most other subjects.

71. Standards by Year 9 are below the national average, but are close to that being achieved in similar schools, with little difference between boys' and girls' performance. However, pupils make sound progress in science from 11 to 14 and their achievement is good. This is because of the pupils' response to good teaching and good curriculum management. Most pupils have an understanding of simple chemical reactions and are beginning to use equations. They understand forces and motion and there are opportunities for all to engage in data collection and graphical skills at different levels. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to apply mathematical techniques, which most pupils do well. Standards by Year 11 are below the national average, but close to that being achieved in similar schools. Most pupils are working with complex abstract ideas such as inheritance, the measurement of energy, atomic structure and radioactivity. At the time of the inspection, classes at ages fourteen and sixteen were being prepared for National Tests and the GCSE. Teachers showed good skill in helping pupils with revision eg in lessons on the periodic table, living things and adaptation, the pyramid of numbers, and pupils are making good use of the revision books supplied by the school. Most teaching groups undertake a good deal of practical work in science modules and benefit from these investigations, for example in a lesson on the conditions for rusting. Pupils generally learn best when they can handle materials and apparatus themselves. More formal investigative work occurs regularly, which effectively develops planning, data collection analysis and evaluative skills. This work is done well by pupils when designing fair tests for measuring the energy released from burning fuel. Social, moral and spiritual dimensions to the curriculum are built into science units in topics such as pollution, ecology, nuclear power and astronomy. Taking into account the low levels of literacy which hamper pupils' understanding and their low levels of prior attainment on entry, the achievement of pupils is good overall.
72. The quality of teaching is good. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons and in over half was good, and on occasions very good. Pupils respond well to the learning opportunities provided and have good attitudes to learning and respect their teachers. Where teaching was good, pupils had a clear idea of what they were expected to learn and be able to do, they were challenged intellectually, as in a lesson on alkanes, alkenes and isomers, and participated actively in oral work. Teachers all have good questioning and communication skills. The effective use of modern technology was seen during a demonstration in which temperature probes were linked to a data logger to record temperatures in a heat transfer, and in the use of a scanner to transfer images from the Internet into teaching aids to support a lesson on adaptation to the environment. However the use of information and communication technology in teaching is not yet sufficiently embedded. In good lessons pupils benefited by effective classroom management strategies. There was nearly always a very prompt start to lessons with a settling activity, involvement was expected from all pupils and learning was conducted at a good pace with a summary of key points at the end. Relevant homework is being regularly set for most classes and is appropriate to the teaching group. Some lessons required a wider variety of stimulus material eg video clips, slides, Internet use, and artefacts to illustrate points rather than reliance on books, commercial worksheets or extended teacher talk. Not all lessons had a suitable activity towards the end to maintain concentration, resulting in some unproductive use of time in the last ten minutes. Individual white boards did fulfil this task well in a revision class on energy by summarising learning achieved in the costing of energy. The handwritten visual material used on overhead projectors is sometimes poor. The lack of Internet facilities, data analysis programs, class sets of loggers and interactive whiteboards in laboratories is limiting the learning opportunities for pupils and having an impact on achievement.
73. Teachers know their pupils well and adapt their lessons to meet the learning needs of individuals and groups. Boys and girls show equal interest in the subject and there are no major differences in achievement. Pupils with special needs are well supported by simpler learning

materials and support assistants. Teachers all have good subject knowledge and teach to their curriculum strengths in the upper school. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievement.

74. Pupils also learn from the attractive displays in laboratories, where attention is given to developing vocabulary, applications of science and the celebration of work completed by pupils. In one laboratory, pupils made good use of learning aids to help with planning experiments. However the accommodation for science is poor – laboratories are poorly decorated, have unsuitable workbenches and gas/electrical services and are difficult to keep clean. Cupboard doors and some blinds are either missing or have not been repaired and flooring is being damaged by stools. All but one of the laboratories requires refurbishment to bring them up to modern standards.
75. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers are appropriately deployed to best meet the needs of pupils and there is an effective monitoring and assessment system that allows the progress of pupils to be monitored closely and predict their grades. Pupils all know the level they are working at and what they need to aim for in future. There is good teamwork in the sharing of tasks, including the development of curriculum materials, and technical support for teachers is good. The department has a realistic view of its needs, but action plans are not sufficiently linked to the raising of standards overall. The current funding for the subject is not sufficient to support the necessary updating of teaching equipment and textbooks.
76. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Schemes of work have been revised to include more investigative approaches to learning and changes to the National Curriculum. The school and department have worked hard, and successfully, to improve the behaviour of a minority of pupils and provide support for teaching staff. Very few instances of poor behaviour were seen. The issues of poor accommodation and the greater use of computers in lessons remain.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall the quality of provision in art is **good**.

### Strengths

- Achievement in GCSE.
- The good quality of teaching.
- Relationships between the teachers and the pupils.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of computers.
- The quality of accommodation.

77. By the age of fourteen the standard of attainment for the majority of pupils is average. A small proportion of pupils achieve standards that are above average. Pupils experience a wide variety of creative opportunities. As a direct consequence of the good provision, most pupils show an interest in their work and are achieving considerable success. By the end of Year 9, pupils draw and paint with a reasonable degree of confidence, work effectively in print making, collage and three-dimensional construction, and have an appreciation for the use of colour, line and tone. The quality of learning of the pupils from Year 7 to Year 9 is good. They increase their knowledge and understanding about artists and cultures. Year 7 pupils produce contact prints based on architectural designs. In Year 8, pupils gain in skills and knowledge through an investigation into the techniques used by artists such as Lichtenstein and Warhol by producing pop art posters. Year 9 pupils are introduced to surrealism by studying the influence of Dali and Magritte, developing their appreciation and understanding of art. Homework assignments are improving research skills. The opportunities to access computer aided art applications are unsatisfactory and limits pupils' capability to conduct research and give them additional creative experiences. Overall, pupils make good progress and those with special educational needs or who are designated as gifted or talented also progress well because lesson planning provides them with stimulating opportunities to

learn and develop their skills and understanding. There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls and all pupils have equal access to every aspect of art education.

78. Over the past three years, GCSE results have been above the national average and better than all other subjects. By the age of sixteen, standards are above average and mirror these previous results. Pupils work effectively across the whole range of activities, building effectively on their experiences in Years 7-9. A majority handle a wide range of materials competently and show a sound understanding of their own individual progress. The quality of learning is good. Research skills are satisfactory. In 2001, a GCSE Textiles course was offered to pupils for the first time. This course has proved to be popular and the pupils are producing good work, in particular, fabric painting and decorative appliqué work based on Egyptian decorative art.
79. Most pupils make at least good, and often very good, progress as a result of the challenging and often diverse nature of the experiences provided by the very effective teaching. Throughout all year groups, the majority of pupils are relatively articulate when discussing their work and many are capable of understanding and using technical language. The promotion by teachers of key words and discussions in all lessons is having a positive effect. Pupils' literacy, understanding of technical language and the development of opinions based on knowledge and understanding of art in society are extended. Homework is used effectively to consolidate learning and to prepare for future lessons. The attitude of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good; it is often very good in Years 10 and 11. A minority find difficulty in sustaining their concentration in independent learning, problem solving and an understanding of aesthetics. These problems are more common with the less motivated pupils who often have a poor attendance record. A majority of pupils are more than willing to share materials and ideas and assist in the distribution and collection of equipment in lessons. Pupils are willing to discuss their work and a significant proportion show pride in their achievements, a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning.
80. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. The best lessons are challenging and well planned, giving all pupils opportunities to progress. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The relationships between the teachers and the pupils are very good providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists, and cultures raise creative and visual appreciation and awareness. The standard achieved by pupils in all year groups is a direct consequence of the quality of teaching. The teachers act as a very effective team providing complementary skills that benefit the pupils by providing them with challenge and inspiration. Connections are also established in many lessons to the school literacy strategy. Pupils are encouraged to read as part of their research into artists and cultures. All classrooms within the department and certain public areas around the school contain very good displays of work, providing an opportunity for pupils to appreciate the standards of work being produced. Assessment is effective and is used as an influence on future curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes pupil self-assessment and the pupils are well aware of teachers' expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils are given target grades for achievement and can discuss their progress towards achieving them. Work is marked at periodic intervals usually linked to the completion of a project. The marking of work is always reinforced by supportive comments by the teachers, and pupils in all year groups are well aware of their level of achievement and what they have to do to make further progress. Pupils with special educational needs are given individual learning targets. However these are not evaluated with sufficient rigour and represent a lost opportunity to gauge accurately the progress being made. Insufficient use is made of computer aided art applications.
81. The leadership and management of the department are good, promoting high standards in lessons and giving clear direction. The teachers work as a very effective team. National Curriculum requirements are met. Accommodation is poor. The classrooms are in need of decoration, repair and replacement of fittings and furniture. Storage space is limited and is having a detrimental impact upon the ability of the teachers to allow the pupils to work on large three-dimensional projects. Resources are sufficient for need and used effectively.
82. The last inspection drew attention to the fact that procedures for assessment were not effective. This is no longer the case. The progress and achievement of all pupils are assessed and recorded and used to good effect in raising attainment. The amount of storage space has not improved. Overall, improvement has been good as standards have risen.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment data to set targets.
- The use of information and communication technology.
- Meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

83. Teacher assessments for 2001 show that standards by the end of Year 9 were below average. In 2001, the number of pupils gaining higher grades in GCSE examinations (A\*- C) was well below the national average. A significant number of pupils do not take a design and technology examination at the end of Year 11 because of the difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers.
84. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Year 9 are attaining better standards than previous teacher assessments and their work is average. This reflects the improving quality of teaching. Through a series of focused tasks and design assignments pupils build up a resource of skills, knowledge and understanding. Work in folders is varied because of the limitations in pupils' standards of literacy, but includes opportunities for pupils to generate and develop their ideas in different product areas. The quality of graphics is good and all pupils have the skills and techniques to represent their ideas effectively. Pupils have limited skills in the use of information and communication technology and do not experience control technology or computer aided drawing. The lack of provision and access to computers limits the development of these skills. Pupils experience concurrent programmes within Years 7-9 in food technology, textiles, resistant materials and graphics. They develop key planning skills and techniques alongside a range of practical skills, providing a basis for more open-ended work in the GCSE course. In Year 9, standards are above average for practical work. Pupils show interest in the design assignments and many are beginning to develop a personal style. They are confident in practical situations and they use tools and equipment sensibly and effectively. There is much good work and pupils obviously enjoy the challenge. Pupils are aware of assessment criteria and what they need to do if they are to improve their work. Teachers review the progress of pupils regularly and details of National Curriculum levels attained, progress made and targets for improvement are communicated to parents. Pupils' achievements are good.
85. Standards by the end of Year 11 from inspection evidence are average, and better than previous results, again a reflection of teaching. Pupils opt for a GCSE course from food technology, textiles, graphics or resistant materials. These programmes make different demands on pupils, although they operate to a common framework for the presentation of their work. Graphics is a skill which all pupils use effectively. There is some use of information and communication technology, particularly in the folder work in project coursework. Standards are average as there are limitations in the range of applications which are used, particularly in control systems and manufacture. Design folders are of a good standard and show a depth of research and analysis as pupils plan their work. Presentation is good; folders contain attractive and innovative work. Practical work is done carefully and pupils use tools, equipment and machinery with confidence. The quality of design products overall is satisfactory and reflects a wide range of styles and interests. Health and safety are given a high profile and pupils use appropriate guards, eye protection and clothing. Special educational needs pupils are clearly identified, and their progress and achievement is good. Most pupils are prepared to use their own time to complete projects during lunchtimes and after school.
86. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive and many demonstrate enthusiasm for, and enjoyment in, their studies. They are attentive and show interest in the challenges and assignments offered. Pupils respond positively to codes of conduct in specialist rooms and their behaviour is good. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good. Pupils concentrate well and they are

keen to succeed. Linked to the good teaching, this leads to the overall satisfactory progress of the pupils.

87. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have created a positive learning environment within which many pupils find interest and stimulation. The teaching team is experienced and hard working. Work is well managed, resources appropriately organised and lessons well prepared. Schemes of work are structured and progressive and they also enable pupils to introduce their own ideas and influences. Assessment is detailed and provides important information to teachers about progress and development. Assessment profiles and periodic review provide all pupils and parents with satisfactory information about progress and attainment. The many good lessons seen had pace, high expectation, structure and purpose. Teachers used their enthusiasm and personalities effectively to stimulate pupils' interest and ensure good behaviour. Homework is integral to current work in class and diary/planners are used effectively to communicate with parents. Teachers use display very well, contributing considerably to pupils' interest and the development of ideas.
88. Leadership and management are good. The head of department gives good educational direction. The specific aims and values of the school are well reflected in the work of the department, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. Good delegation ensures the effective contribution of staff with curriculum responsibilities. The curriculum has been developed so that activities are relevant to pupils. Schemes of work are in place, giving detail of long term planning to show which knowledge, skills and understanding pupils should achieve. There are issues which have not been addressed since the last inspection; access to design and technology in Years 10 and 11 for all pupils and the use of computer aided design and control systems. These aspects remain unsatisfactory, with access to the curriculum being limited by the difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers. Whilst the assessment system is effectively used, a sharper focus needs to be given to the application of National Curriculum levels in the moderation of pupils' work in each year group. This will have the potential to ensure that teachers are secure with their understanding of the level descriptors. Similarly, the outcomes from the analysis of data available to the department are not used sufficiently well to set targets and to improve standards. The head of department recognises that more support for pupils can be achieved through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The development plan is adequate and includes a focus on raising standards, but objectives to achieve this are not always sufficiently clear. The workshop technician provides a good level of support and is beginning to make an effective contribution to the smooth running of the department. Risk assessments are carried out and acted upon.
89. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and in the accommodation to teach food technology. Standards have risen but the weakness in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 means that statutory curriculum requirements are still not met.

### **Child Development (GCSE)**

The overall quality of provision in child development is **good**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in GCSE examinations.</li><li>• Pupils achieve well and make good progress.</li><li>• Teaching is consistently good.</li></ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The use of information and communication technology.</li></ul>
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90. This course is an option choice in Years 10 and 11. In the GCSE examination in 2001, the number of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was above the national average.

91. Standards being achieved by the end of Year 11 by the current cohort of pupils are above average and reflect previous results. The individual practical projects which are an integral part

of course work assignments are of a good standard. They include research and observational studies of young children and are beneficial to the pupils as they gain a good understanding of child development. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work and take pride in the quality of their project work. They are keen to discuss their work and do so with a level of confidence. They enjoy the work which provides stimulus and challenge and endeavour to succeed through patience and determination. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning are always good. Pupils show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They take responsibility for organising their tasks and there is much independent work.

92. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers have good subject knowledge. The lessons are well planned and are effective through the clear, short term objectives, which are well shared with the pupils. Careful attention is paid to the sequence of activities, which contributes to a good pace. Activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain learning. The teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high. Learning objectives and work are flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the teachers give helpful oral and written comments which are informative, constructive and encourage pupils. Homework is effectively set to reinforce the content of lessons.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards.
- GCSE pupils have positive attitudes to their work.

### Areas for improvement

- Results at GCSE.
- Provision for drama in Years 7,8 and 9.
- Accommodation.

93. The GCSE results in 2001 were well below national standards. Drama is taught by members of the English department on a rotational basis, and they respond well to the challenges raised by the course.
94. Standards are below average by the end of Year 11. Pupils start the course with limited drama skills because the subject is not taught separately in Years 7 to 9 and they make at least satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11. Two lessons were seen during the inspection and both were well taught. Pupils enjoyed what they did. The small number of higher attaining pupils can sustain a role successfully using body language, movement and improvised dialogue well to portray character and convey emotion. Lower attaining pupils lack confidence in using drama techniques; they have a limited range of skills from which to draw, they are self-conscious when doing improvised work and their portrayals lack conviction.
95. Lessons take place in English classrooms and there is a modest range of technical resources. Whilst teachers and pupils make the best of the situation, accommodation is currently unsatisfactory and is having a negative impact on standards. Drama is a strong feature of the extra-curricular life of the school. Theatre visits are arranged and the annual school production gives pupils in all year groups the opportunity to take part. It is an area greatly valued by the school.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching in a substantial proportion of lessons.
- Use of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

### Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations.
- The use of assessment to inform pupils and to guide planning.
- The use of ICT.
- Departmental staffing and planning.

96. Results in the GCSE examinations for pupils aged sixteen in 2001 were well below average for grades A\* to C but close to the average for A\* to G grades. These results show a substantial decline from those shown in the last inspection report and especially so over the last four years. Results declined to very low levels in 2000. Although this was corrected to a slightly better result in 2001, it was still far below average. Teacher assessment of the pupils at the age of fourteen show grades that indicate near average levels of attainment. This contrasts with the grades gained two years later by these pupils when they are in Year 11, and evidence seen during the time of the inspection. This decline in standards is brought about by the difficulties in staffing and pupils' low levels of attendance and low levels of literacy.
97. Inspection evidence shows that standards at age fourteen are below average. Standards are below average when pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 7, in terms of geographical knowledge and skills, and in literacy. Whilst most pupils make satisfactory progress, too many are making insufficient gains and their progress is unsatisfactory. A small group of pupils of higher previous attainment do reach average standards. When they are at the end of Year 9 most pupils use maps simply and know the major continents and oceans. They use atlases to locate places and understand that different maps do not necessarily show the same area on the Earth's surface. All pupils can distinguish between developed and developing countries and know what criteria are used. They describe features orally in both physical and human geographical contexts accurately, and writing supports literacy targets. Pupils of higher attainment levels understand the reasons that contribute to a higher birth rate and calculate the Gross National Product, but these are few in number.
98. Standards by the age of sixteen from inspection evidence are below average, and pupils make satisfactory progress. The teaching, by supply staff, is having a positive effect on standards and progress. Although many pupils can make simple descriptive accounts of, for example, physical erosion processes, very few can integrate this with evidence on Ordnance Survey maps. Most pupils know how an earthquake occurs, how it is measured on the Richter scale, and understand that this is a logarithmic scale. This underpins their use of numeracy. Relating the effects of earthquakes, and other natural hazards, such as volcanic eruptions, to environmental effects and the human response to living in hazardous areas, are less well expressed or understood. Course work shows a satisfactory competence with the basic approaches and presentation of material, such as the use of graphic material and descriptive analysis. The use of information and communication technology to illustrate this work is underdeveloped. Advanced concepts such as forming hypotheses are not well done and there is heavy teacher guidance, which hinders the development of independent thinking.
99. The school is experiencing quite severe problems in staffing the department. During the inspection, three teachers were observed, one of whom is a long serving member of staff who has changed his original teaching timetable to ensure continued support for those nearing examinations. The two others were temporary and part time. They are not the same teachers that have taken the classes over recent weeks. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their skills to underpin the literacy and numeracy skills needed. They teach how to use graphs to identify climate characteristics. They involve pupils in making notes. Better lessons use a variety of

methods, from photographic interpretation to challenging questions. This was seen in a Year 8 lesson evaluating factors affecting the environment and in a Year 9 lesson when pupils were working out why some countries have lower infant mortality rates than others.

100. Pupils of different levels of attainment including those with special educational needs within a class are catered for by individual attention and adjusting questions and demands. All pupils of varied attainment levels, of different gender and race are included in the teaching, although the planning of lessons does not specifically mention different groups. The use of information and communication technology is unsatisfactory save for downloads from Internet sources. This is a detriment to research and presentational aspects of the pupils' work. A high absence rate means that many pupils miss lessons and lateness causes interruption to the smooth flow of lessons. An asset to teaching is that most pupils who attend regularly are keen to learn, listen well to both teachers and each other, are willing to make their own contributions and mostly present their work well.
101. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The head of department was absent during the inspection and there are significant weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation, assessment and implementation of school policies. Departmental development planning is unsatisfactory. The rapid decline in GCSE results over the years since the last inspection is a matter of great concern. The senior management of the school paid for a scrutiny of the papers written by GCSE pupils in 2000. In this year the percentage of pupils attaining A\* - C fell to 16, very far below the national levels. The following year results were much better, although still well below expected levels. Marking of class and homework is erratic, with some books not having been marked. Others are regularly evaluated with comments relating to levels of effort and quality. Because there is little evidence to show how assessments are used to help in planning future work, and temporary staff have been used on frequent occasions, lessons lack consistent connections and planning for targets that raise standards.
102. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen and remain well below national levels. Assessment procedures have not been carried out consistently which is unhelpful for maintaining the progress that was identified on the former occasion. Urgent measures to change management practices, especially those related to raising pupils' standards, and continuity of teaching are needed to prevent still further decline in pupils' standards.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- Standards are rising.
- Pupils' good attitudes.
- The use of assessment.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT as a tool for research.
- Provision of educational trips.

103. In 2001, GCSE results at A\*-C were below average. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average overall. Pupils achieve well in Years 7-9, and particularly in Year 8, because of good teaching, which challenges yet provides full support for pupils experiencing difficulties. In the first three years, from low standards on entry, pupils make good progress in acquiring historical skills and in understanding how historians work. In Year 9, pupils of all attainment levels find the use of historical terminology difficult and struggle with accuracy in oral and written work because of their weakness in literacy. However, they make quite perceptive comments in Year 8, for example, about the usefulness and reliability of parish records and they deduce quite complex trends from a burial register relating to the years 1693-1702 and can complete bar graphs on their findings. In Year 9, they use cartoons, video footage and textual evidence to



make decisions on why soldiers' views on the First World War changed after 1916. When prompted by the teacher, they use the correct historical words and go further to explain the opinions of ordinary infantrymen on those who led them. Pupils in lower sets cannot interpret evidence to the same degree but, nonetheless, they have sound background knowledge of trench warfare and can outline what life was like for those fighting on the Western Front.

104. There is no Year 11 history class this year, but there is a viable group in Year 10. Inspection evidence shows that standards are average. Because of a modified scheme of work, a new examination syllabus and high expectations of what pupils can achieve, standards are better than examination results suggest. Pupils in this year group further develop their questioning of evidence, building well on their work in Year 9. They put their skills to good use as they analyse source material in greater detail. Pupils are adept at selecting salient points from the textbook and their note-making skills are, therefore, of a high order. Moreover, they look at the events leading to the rise of Hitler in a sophisticated fashion and give convincing arguments why both 1923 and 1929 were watersheds in his political career. Work scrutinised and also seen during lessons demonstrated that pupils in this year are operating in line with national averages.
105. The quality of teaching is a major strength of the department. During the inspection, it was never less than satisfactory and in over half the lessons it was good, and occasionally very good. Teachers care deeply for the progress, both academic and social, of pupils in their charge and they recognise that high expectations, challenging questions and immediate feedback on their work are the keys to improved performance. They treat their pupils with dignity and share with them all lesson objectives and the progress made towards achieving them. Teachers use varied strategies to maintain their pupils' interest and their classroom management is effective. Questioning is relentless and on the many occasions when pupils work in pairs and in groups, teachers spend considerable time visiting individuals to check on progress and to ensure that new work is being understood and assimilated. A very good Year 8 lesson on the analysis and interpretation of parish burial registers resulted in pupils being visibly surprised at just how much they had achieved. Because teachers are reflective, and evaluate their work on a regular basis, they are now looking at ways of extending their marking to offer their pupils even more information on how they may improve. Furthermore, they are considering how they may involve their pupils more in the assessment of their own work. Pupils are already aware of standards at which they are operating and are very keen to reach the next level; they are, however, not always sure about how to reach it. Teachers are concerned to ensure that all pupils have opportunities to make progress and, therefore, pupils who often find things hard make good progress too and are delighted when they are able to see just how much they have learned. Pupils respond well to the teaching and behave sensibly. They benefit from the industry and commitment of their teachers, who produce materials, which both interest them and encourage them to think about the past in shades of grey, rather than in black and white.
106. The department is well led and managed and, because teachers try very hard to involve all pupils in what the subject has to offer, they have produced a scheme of work, including detailed resources, which is a solid foundation for the teaching. The scheme is developing further to include even more information on how the individual learning needs of all pupils are to be met. Because a new, more relevant GCSE syllabus has recently been introduced, standards are beginning to rise and the subject is, therefore, becoming more popular. The head of department supports non-specialist staff effectively and teachers cooperate well during the assessment of formal National Curriculum assignments. Accommodation is sound, but the display in the main teaching classroom does not yet contain pupils' work. Resources are adequate, but there is a need for more up-to-date library stock and computer hardware and software. Opportunities for educational visits are very limited.
107. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Teaching has improved significantly but use of information and communication technology as a tool for research is still underdeveloped. Standards are now rising. Teachers in the department are talented professionals and they share a vision for how history should be taught. The department is, therefore, well placed for future success.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils work well together.
- The range of learning resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for accreditation in skills at the end of Year 11.
- The teaching and use of computers in subjects across the curriculum.
- The use of assessment.
- Meeting National Curriculum requirements.

108. The focus was on information and communication technology as a discrete subject and the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
109. Teacher assessments for Year 9, in 2001, show that standards were well below average. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001, were well below the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades (A\* - C). A significant number of pupils were not accredited in the use of information and communication technology skills as there were no examination courses.
110. Standards by the end of Year 9 show improvement over previous assessments and are now average. Better resources and teaching has initiated this improvement in standards. Pupils have access to timetabled information and communication technology lessons and they learn the full range of applications expected by the National Curriculum. In these lessons, pupils demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with processing text and images and presenting information. They can also access the Internet and use this to carry out research and download images. Pupils are effectively developing an understanding of a spreadsheet, but few can use or remember the formulae for easy mathematical calculations. They experience difficulty in giving examples of where spreadsheets could be used. Pupils have had limited opportunities to use a database; therefore their understanding of this element is unsatisfactory. They make progress in these courses but there is a lack of opportunity to reinforce their skills in the other subjects of the curriculum.
111. In Year 10 and Year 11, pupils' attainment in GCSE, and in the recently introduced GNVQ lessons, is in line with the expected standard for 16 year olds. The quality of teaching and pupils' interest and enthusiasm are raising standards. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software including desk top publishing, data bases, and in using spreadsheets to simulate business practice. Good use is made of computers to promote individual learning. In the GNVQ lessons pupils use computers to develop their course work assignments. They have opportunities to apply their skills to solve more complex problems particularly in handling information and data. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce results of good quality. They are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete.
112. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and application of a range of skills. There are limited opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise these skills in other subjects, which would help their progress. The majority of pupils in all year groups make progress through a range of opportunities to develop aspects of desk top publishing, spreadsheets, use of a data base, presentation and word processing. Their progress in other strands specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study is unsatisfactory and insufficient attention is paid to the aspects of control systems, data logging and computer aided design.
113. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and behave well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use

their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve and try to meet them.

114. In specialist lessons the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates pupils and maintains their interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence. There are too few examples of teaching in other subjects helping to contribute to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills.
115. In the absence of a head of department, because of recruitment difficulties, the senior management team has established a clear vision and direction by which to promote curricular improvements. There are specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are part of the overall performance management, but there is insufficient monitoring on an on-going basis to address weakness in cross curriculum work. There are systems to monitor the progress and attainment of pupils in discrete lessons, but not across subjects. Technical support is available for one day a week and the school has plans to appoint a full time technician as soon as a suitable candidate can be recruited. There are opportunities for pupils to use computers during the lunch time and at other times when pupils can develop their computer skills and have access to the Internet.
116. There has been unsatisfactory progress with the areas identified for development in the last inspection overall. There has been a good improvement in resources and the school has introduced GNVQ at Key Stage 4. Improvement has been made in an increased challenge in work set for pupils and improvement of access. Training has been provided for subject teachers so that they can use applications and access the network. The issues which still need to be addressed are the accreditation of all pupils in computer skills at the end of Year 11, fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum and in the use of computers in all subjects across the curriculum.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum.**

117. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Some subject areas, including English, science and mathematics, plan for the teaching of information and communication technology in schemes of work, but there was very little evidence of what pupils had achieved except for one lesson in science where pupils were using data logging equipment. Higher attaining pupils use their own time to complete course work assignments using word processing and desk top publishing. Pupils also access the Internet to carry out research for projects. At present, pupils have too few opportunities to use computers because teachers are not planning for their use in lessons. An audit of the use of computers across the curriculum has not been carried out and the absence of a coordinator has meant that there are few opportunities to monitor and review developments throughout the school.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Standards in listening and understanding.

### Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations.
- Use of assessment.
- Departmental development planning.
- Meeting National Curriculum requirements.

118. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in both French and German show average standards overall. GCSE results in modern foreign languages improved in 2001 and the German grades were the best achieved in the last four years. However, the GCSE levels gained last year were lower than those gained by the same pupils in almost all other subjects in the school and the grades achieved in recent years remain well below the national average. Standards have not yet started to rise sufficiently since the last inspection.
119. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average. The standards of work in lessons and in pupils' exercise books vary considerably, but the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils are good at listening and understanding the target language. They concentrate carefully and follow without difficulty both when tape-recorded exercises are played and when teachers use French or German as the natural medium of instruction. Teachers of both languages were skilful in using the target language and some particularly good examples were seen in French, where the oral and aural standards achieved by the pupils were above average. Pupils are less willing to use the target language themselves and standards of speaking are average overall. This applies throughout the attainment range in French, but in German standards in speaking are often above average. They are most likely to be above average when the teacher provides opportunities for pupils to generate ideas by choosing their own words. A Year 9 German lesson on leisure activities produced a particularly lively response. Less able pupils produce above average standards of oral work when they are involved in games and other activities which make their learning enjoyable as well as meaningful. The writing in Years 7, 8 and 9 is usually highly structured and pupils rarely have the chance to demonstrate above average standards.
120. Standards by the end of Year 11 are average, showing an improving trend from previous examination results. This is because of the high expectations and quality of teaching. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 build on the strong base established by Year 9 so that they develop above average standards in listening and understanding. The standards of written work produced by above average pupils in Year 10 and 11 fully reflect their skills and are good in both languages. The written work produced by average and lower attaining pupils shows weaknesses in accuracy and grammar, and occasionally, even amongst the older pupils, falls below their potential. The reading skill is well developed in both languages. All pupils are able to infer meaning, using a variety of clues.
121. In the majority of lessons, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils were good and in some cases very good. This is due both to the overall school ethos and also to the skills of the languages teachers in managing their classrooms and in adjusting the work set to meet the differing needs of their pupils. Nevertheless, poor attendance in lessons and the low numbers of pupils who opt to continue studying a language after the age of fourteen are causes of concern.
122. The quality of teaching is good, with particular skills evident in both languages. Very good models of target language use are in evidence in French and imaginative ideas for lesson activities, relevant to the interests of the pupils, were observed in German. Lessons are well structured, although pupils do not have the opportunity to develop their experience of information and communication technology. Lesson materials are clearly presented and

teachers often prepare worksheets at more than one level of difficulty in order to ensure that all pupils can achieve. Teachers mark pupils' work and set homework regularly. They also make sure that links with parents are maintained and used to benefit pupils when possible. Opportunities for pupils to be creative and develop the skills of learning independently occurred in some lessons, but less frequently enough in French. When pupils were not given the chance to think for themselves and develop their own ideas, they became over-reliant on their teacher. The result of this was failure to retain taught material and a decline in standards, particularly in French.

123. The management of the department is satisfactory with a combination of strengths and areas which must be developed. Relationships between members of staff are good; some collaborative work is done and more could be undertaken. Recent difficulties in recruiting well qualified staff have been managed successfully and have now been overcome. Resources are satisfactory and there are good acoustics, but the flooring in two classrooms is in serious need of attention. The departmental development plan is not effectively structured to focus on the overall raising of standards and the number of pupils opting for languages. Assessment information is not used effectively to measure outcomes. Given that standards are lower than in other subjects in the school and that the numbers opting for languages after the age of fourteen are falling, these issues are important and must be addressed.
124. Three issues raised in the previous inspection have improved. Staffing in the department is now good, expectations in German are now high and some teachers offer pupils opportunities to develop their skills in extended writing. Two issues raised previously remain unresolved. Some pupils aged fourteen to sixteen are still denied access to the languages curriculum and insufficient use is made of assessment information to inform developments within the department. Overall, improvement has been unsatisfactory.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Pupils in Years 7-9 achieve well for their prior attainment.
- The wide variety of teaching techniques.
- Music is fully inclusive and available for all pupils.
- Wide diversity of extra-curricular activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in GCSE courses.
- Assessment procedures.
- Pupils' knowledge and use of musical terminology in listening and appraising.
- Use of information and communication technology.

125. Teacher assessments for 2001 show that by the age of 14 the attainment of the majority of pupils was well below average. However, in relation to their prior attainment, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Results in GCSE examinations for a very small cohort of pupils were below average but a comparison against national averages is unreliable because of the small number of candidates.
126. There is a wide variation in pupils' previous musical knowledge when they arrive at the school, with the majority achieving well below average standards. Inspection evidence shows that, by Year 9, the attainment of the majority of pupils is below average. Pupils understand the basic elements of music such as tempo, pitch and structure through performing and composing on keyboards and a range of classroom instruments. A minority of pupils have very low concentration levels. This lack of concentration, particularly during practical activities and listening exercises, can be disruptive to the rest of the class and hinder learning. Listening skills are unsatisfactory. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to appraise their own performances and compositions using technical musical language. The majority of pupils show little technical skill in their musical vocabulary. Pupils demonstrated they can compose bass riffs and simple chord structures. Pupils' responses to questioning are slow and reluctant but they generally work

collaboratively in small groups when using electronic keyboards. Potentially higher attaining pupils are underachieving because they are insufficiently challenged. Below average pupils can create simple compositions. They can improvise and perform a Raga, appraise and assess to set their own targets to improve and develop their skills.

127. In Year 11 attainment is below average. This reflects the fact that many of the pupils are often absent, thus hampering their progress. Their attitudes to independent learning and the failure to complete their course work will debar many of them from the final examination at GCSE. Pupils do not have the in-depth musical knowledge. Standards of performing and composing are variable but are below average overall. Above average pupils in Year 11 are competent instrumentalists and vocalists. They understand the key components of melody and harmony and how to apply them to their compositions, as was heard in one girl's tape of her own composed songs. Most can follow traditional notation but there was no evidence of notating their own music using computer software. Standards in Year 10 are well below average. Seventeen pupils, with a wide range of prior attainment, and mostly non-instrumentalists, have opted for GCSE producing a large diverse robust enthusiastic group. Their attitudes to independent learning are adversely affecting attainment. In one lesson, pupils composed a very simple chord sequence to accompany a piece of Caribbean Reggae music, using electronic keyboards. They were not given the opportunity to perform their composition to the rest of the class, nor to appraise, using musical technical language, nor to set targets to improve their work. Therefore pupils are not developing their skills in performing, composing and appraising and are not aware of what they must do to improve.
128. Achievement by pupils with special educational needs is good, reflecting the good support that they receive. They are presented with appropriately challenging work and achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their previous levels of attainment. No significant differences were observed between the standards achieved by boys and girls and pupils from different ethnic groups. The majority of pupils are keen to learn; they enjoy the practical activities and participate willingly. The more musically talented instrumentalists are not always challenged by the set tasks and could be stretched further. Contributions to literacy skills are underdeveloped, although some attention has been given to the use of key words displayed on the walls of the department and some simple musical vocabulary. Computer and numeracy skills are at a lower stage of development. All pupils have the opportunity to receive instrumental lessons free of charge and some pupils take advantage of this opportunity, which has a positive impact on their musical education. A diversity of world music together with traditional western music is used to enhance the music curriculum.
129. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and enjoy the lessons. Teachers have adequate subject knowledge and plan lessons with a variety of activities and changes in seating to give pupils changes of focus. Planned activities are not always carefully sequenced to ensure pupils' satisfactory progress and development in pupils' performing, composing and appraising. Listening skills are not taught effectively utilising all the musical elements together rather than in isolation. The greatest strengths in teaching are seen where there is a practical focus in lessons and pupils are supported in developing their musical skills and knowledge. Lessons have good openings with shared aims and end with a plenary to reinforce learning. In practical sessions, the teachers go round the class giving their support to pupils. However, the pace of these practical activities is occasionally slow, with too much time spent on a single activity which results in pupils achieving low levels of progress and learning. The management of pupils is not always well handled and frequently results in wasted time. Homework is used effectively to develop the pupils' writing and research skills and enhance the curriculum. The quality and effectiveness of assessment is unsatisfactory as it does not consistently ensure that pupils are fully aware of its meaning so that they know how well they are doing.
130. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department is led by a newly appointed head of department in his first subject leadership position, who is supported by a newly qualified, newly appointed teacher. There is a sense of purpose within the new department, which is planning to raise standards and increase participation in extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons. Schemes of work are developing well and include opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology, and explore music from other cultures. The

department is now fully monitored and evaluated regularly by the senior management team. There is a good selection of extra-curricular activities including a choir, Irish Band, orchestra and other ensembles that enhance the curriculum. Regular musical events are organised throughout the year, both within school and the local community, which enhance pupils' musical and social experiences. The schools production of The Wizard of Oz took place the week before the inspection and was very well supported and received.

131. In the face of considerable staffing difficulties, the department has broadly maintained its provision since the last inspection. Standards have fallen but are showing good signs of recovery this year. The school encourages all pupils to opt for music for GCSE, operating a fully inclusive policy. The governors enhance every pupil's musical opportunity by paying the full cost of instrumental tuition. This completely supports the development of musical skills in school, although standards do not reflect this. Pupils of lower attainment now achieve well. To ensure that further improvement in provision occurs attention needs to be given to developing computer resources and the overall quality of teaching.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Quality of teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive.
- Leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment information to track all pupils' progress.
- Time allocation in Years 10 and 11.
- The organisational arrangements that currently create a serious imbalance in group size.
- The quality of specialist outdoor facilities.

132. Attainment on entry to the school is generally below average and pupils' prior experience shows significant variation. Limited assessment evidence indicates that physical fitness, co-ordination and ball skills are below expected levels. GCSE results in 2001 for those pupils who choose to take the course were above the national average for A\*-C grades and above the school's all subject average. Over the last four years the overall trend has been upwards. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in these examinations.

133. By the end of Year 9 standards of attainment are average. This matches closely the department's teacher assessments for 2001. This testing also indicated a difference between boys and girls and this factor is currently still evident. For example in a Year 9 basketball class there was clear evidence of achievement by boys over time. Ball handling skills were good and most boys displayed standards of stamina above the national average. In a Year 9 athletics lesson for girls, most have developed a good style in their running but their capacity to sustain a challenging pace is below that expected for this age. The improvement on overall standards at this stage represents good progress.

134. By the age of 16, standards have been sustained against previous examination results and remain in line with national expectations. In some Year 11 classes, both boys and girls achieve well and reach higher than expected levels of attainment. For example, in trampolining, most girls can produce accurate and well-controlled sequences of movement; in badminton most boys have a good range of shots and can sustain rallies well. A key strength in the school is basketball and, in a GCSE class, almost all boys have sufficiently well-developed individual skills in handling, passing and shooting to enable them to play the game to a high standard. In GCSE, written work standards are sound and almost all notebooks in one set contain a well presented and accurate record of the course. These books are regularly marked although comments and guidance on 'what needs to be improved' lack detail.

135. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. This is especially so amongst younger pupils and boys in particular. Their success in some tasks, for example in shooting in soccer, enables them to feel good about their work and, indeed, about themselves. Consequently they will tackle further challenges for improvement with a higher degree of self-confidence.
136. In all years many pupils reach high standards in activities in which they represent the school in both team and individual events. There is a good range of competitive fixtures and the trophy cabinet in the school foyer contains examples of many recent successes across a wide spectrum of events. The best, and most recent, example was the school's success in the national cross-country championships. This is a clear indication of how the combination of individual personal fitness and determination together with superb teamwork can produce such high standards at this level.
137. Pupils in all years display a positive approach to their work. In some lessons, for example in a Year 8 fitness session, the levels of commitment and energy shown by all boys were exceptional and the key factor in producing high standards of movement and control. Behaviour is invariably good and all pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Most are eager to do well and show this in a variety of ways. The standards of personal kit, attendance and participation in both lessons and extra-curricular activities are all good.
138. The quality of teaching is always good and, in some lessons, very good. All teachers know their subject very well and all are successful in planning and managing activities designed to raise standards. The style of teaching is encouraging and teachers challenge pupils well. This consistency ensures that in most classes most pupils know what they need to do in order to improve. They respond in a most positive manner and derive considerable enjoyment from their efforts. The teachers know well the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and provide sensitive and accurate feedback on performance and effort. There are good relationships both amongst the pupils and between pupils and teachers and in most classes this feature accelerates learning. For example in Year 11 the maturity in supporting the work of other pupils in preparing for external assessment was particularly noticeable, especially in the positive effects it had on the standards of performance in both basketball and trampolining.
139. The department is well managed. The programme of activities is well documented and this supports the smooth running of the lessons. The extra-curricular programme provided in physical education and games is very popular and successful in supporting pupils' personal and social development. All specialist teachers and those from outside the department show considerable commitment through their contribution to the high levels of participation and enjoyment of many pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are currently allocated insufficient number of lessons in physical education compared with similar schools and this has a clear effect on the number and range of activities available to them. Group sizes in this age-range are inconsistent across different classes and this too restricts the number and quality of learning experiences available to some pupils. Facilities at the school for outdoor lessons are inadequate, which affects the department's capability to offer a broader range of activities to all pupils.
140. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are currently satisfactory, although the department recognises the need for further development in making more detailed reference to the National Curriculum level descriptors in all activities. At present insufficient use is made of the information collected through assessment procedures to inform target setting. This limits the department's capability to measure accurately and objectively its own effectiveness and to subsequently produce more detailed plans on how to raise standards.
141. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards reached in GCSE classes are higher and now exceed national averages for A\*-C grades. The curriculum is better balanced with more emphasis on levels of personal physical fitness and capability, although achievements in games continue to remain a strength of the school. There are still key areas for improvement and the strengths now reported, especially the commitment of teachers and pupils, augur well for further progress.