

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BIDDICK SCHOOL SPORTS COLLEGE**

Washington, Tyne and Wear

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108866

Headteacher: Mr R Wilkinson

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver  
20224

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 192390

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Biddick Lane  
Columbia  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear

Postcode: NE38 8AL

Telephone number: 0191 219 3680

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Chisholm

Date of previous inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 1997

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Biddick School Sports College is attended by pupils who live mainly in Washington, Tyne and Wear. Some pupils who live outside the local authority's boundary are also on roll. As a specialist sports college since 1997, the first in the north of England, the school manages a programme of sporting activities, both in the school itself and in three other secondary and 22 primary schools within the Sunderland Education Action Zone, and receives additional funding for this. Its status as a specialist sports college was renewed for a further three years in September 2001. It holds the Sportsmark Gold, awarded by Sport England, and the Football Association's Chartermark for schools. The school is involved in the national Excellence in Cities programme to develop the potential of all students, and is a pilot school for the DfES masterclass programme for sport. The school is comprehensive and provides for 1072 girls and boys aged 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11). There are slightly more boys than girls on roll, especially in Year 9. The school is about the same size as most other secondary schools, and of similar size to what it was at its last inspection in 1997. It is very popular and oversubscribed, despite fewer numbers of pupils of secondary age in the area. Fewer pupils than is typical joined or left the school, other than at the usual ages of 11 or 16. A few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. None speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals has usually been above the national average, but recently the numbers claiming free meals have reduced to be broadly average, following changes in local social security entitlements affecting many pupils in schools in Sunderland. The percentage of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs, including those with statements of special need, some of whom have physical impairments, is in line with the national average. When pupils enter the school at age 11 (Year 7), their levels of attainment span the full range, but are, overall, close to average, although there are more pupils whose attainment is below rather than above average on entry.

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

This is a very good school. Pupils achieve very well because of the school's outstanding commitment to them. They attain standards that are well above the average of similar schools. Teaching is good overall; much is very good and some is excellent. Leadership and management are very good. The school gives very good value for money.

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

- The school's outstanding commitment to its pupils enables them to achieve highly.
- Leadership and management are very good. The leadership team has the confidence of staff, parents, pupils and the community, and is taking the school forward with excellent initiatives to extend pupils' learning.
- Teaching is good overall; much is very good and some is excellent, enabling pupils to learn successfully.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave well because they gain confidence from very good relationships and make the most of their opportunities.
- The learning opportunities that are provided for pupils are very good, and include an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- The school ensures that pupils and the community benefit greatly from the opportunities it provides as a sports college.

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

- Dining accommodation.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Since the last inspection in March 1997, the school has improved considerably. The headteacher, appointed in May 2000, has built well on the successes of his predecessor. Although the standards attained in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations have remained average in comparison

with those of all schools and well above the average of schools of similar type, the trend in the average points attained by pupils in these tests and examinations has risen significantly above the national rate of improvement since the last inspection. Accommodation and learning resources have improved substantially, with a new hall, learning centre, new classrooms and many more computers and books available. The key issues of the last inspection have been resolved very well. The setting of academic targets for individual pupils is more consistent and data are used well by departments. Monitoring of teaching and departmental performance has become established practice. Performance management has been introduced successfully to support the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Some staff, including newly qualified teachers, have been appointed since the last inspection and support and induction have been very effective in enabling them to contribute well. As a result of the efforts made, teaching, which was good in 1997, has improved further and almost one in three lessons is now very good or of excellent quality. Senior tutors and tutors monitor pupils' progress more closely. All pupils are mentored and supported to help them to improve their work and, where necessary, their attendance. The issue requiring improved attendance has been very well met and attendance is now well above the national average rate overall, as a result of very determined efforts by the school. Year 11's current rate of attendance, a particular concern in 1997, has reached the national average rate. The school now publishes and uses a homework timetable. Most parents are satisfied that their children receive homework that extends learning well. Useful homework is now set regularly. The leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors has very good capacity to take the school even further forward.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds (Year 11) based on average point scores+ in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar++ schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

+The average point score at GCSE is calculated on a scale of 1 point for each grade G attained, rising by one point per grade, up to 8 points for each grade A\*. The average point score is considered the best measure of the school's overall performance.

++Reference to similar schools is to those schools that contain a similar proportion of students who claim entitlement to free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with students of similar backgrounds. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country.

Girls and boys of different academic potential and ethnic background make good progress from entry to the school and achieve very well. In the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2001, pupils attained average standards in comparison with those of all schools in English, mathematics and science, the three subjects tested. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' attainment was well above average, and this standard has been consistently maintained in all recent years.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils attained average standards compared with those of all schools, but compared with similar schools, standards were well above average. This has been the situation since the last inspection. The year group taking GCSE examinations in 2001 was of slightly lower potential, and the percentage gaining five or more A\* to C grades was below average, when it has regularly been average in all other recent years. However, the percentage attaining five or more A\* to G grades in 2001 was very high, and among the top five per cent of similar schools. The difference in the attainment of girls and boys has been less than the difference nationally except in 2001, when girls were ahead of boys by more than the national difference in performance between the sexes. The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds usually attain very well in GCSE examinations and most continue with further education after Year 11, as do most other students. In the last three years, pupils did very well, in comparison with their other subjects, in

art, English and physical education. They did comparatively less well in these three years in design and technology, modern foreign languages, mathematics and sciences. In these subjects, plans are in place to secure improvement and, in some cases, new subject leaders have been appointed. Evidence from the inspection indicates that improvement is taking place and standards seen are now, generally, more in line with those of other subjects.

Overall, in work seen during the inspection, pupils attained average standards in all years. In English, they chose words well to describe their personal experiences in discussion and in writing. In mathematics, they worked well to gain a good understanding of the subject, but the moderate pace at which some lessons were conducted sometimes restricted their progress. In science, pupils applied scientific principles well in practical work and worked safely when conducting experiments. Competent pupils had good understanding of how science is applied to daily life, but those with less competence had difficulty linking cause and effect. Pupils applied cultural understanding very well in dance.

The five-year trend in results in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations, based on the average point score attained, indicates a more rapid rate of improvement than that which has taken place nationally. This trend shows considerable improvement in the standards attained by pupils of very differing levels of competence and they all achieve well. The academic targets that the school sets are intended to be very challenging, and although results usually come close to the target, they did not meet that set for the attainment of five or more A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2001.

#### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have pride in their school. They concentrate in class and make good progress in the vast majority of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in almost all lessons and when less directly supervised around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and contribute well to pupils' good personal development.
Attendance	Well above average. Unauthorised absence is in line with national standards.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 to 9</b>	<b>Years 10 and 11</b>
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.*

Teaching is good and much is very good. One in every ten lessons is excellent. Teaching meets the needs of pupils of different academic potential and from different backgrounds very well. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. There is some very good teaching across the curriculum. Some excellent lessons were seen in art and design, English, dance, information and communication technology and mathematics. No subject was poorly taught. Literacy is taught well in English and across the curriculum. Numeracy is taught well in mathematics and science, and adequately in other subjects. Key features of teaching are that most teachers expect a high level of commitment from pupils, manage them well and give them confidence to achieve their best. Pupils respond well to teachers and relationships are very good. They learn successfully because they concentrate in lessons and work hard. Some pupils become tired and lose attention in lessons in the latter part of the school day.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good overall. Pupils have a very good range of learning opportunities, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Students achieve very well when supported in lessons and when given separate special tuition. Reading practice with staff before school is very helpful in giving them the skills and confidence to manage all subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good and their cultural development is well provided for. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has great commitment to its pupils and cares very well for them, enabling them to achieve very well.

The school works closely with parents who give it strong endorsement for the high quality of education that it provides for their children. Pupils do not have the opportunity to participate in an act of collective worship every day. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their full statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum in information and communication technology; purchase of equipment to ensure requirements can be met is planned.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Energetic, active and effective leadership and teamwork are taking the school forward very well with improved teaching, accommodation and resources.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors have close links with the school, have a very good knowledge of standards and contribute actively to the quality of education provided. They participate well in planning, evaluate performance and set challenging targets for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching and the progress made towards the targets in the school improvement plan are closely monitored and evaluated, and action is taken to improve performance where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funding is used very well to benefit the school. Funding deriving from national initiatives is greatly benefiting pupils, partner schools and the local community.

Pupils receive an education of very good quality from the funding with which the school is provided; it achieves best value from the goods and services that it purchases. Dining accommodation is inadequate in size and many pupils leave the school site at lunchtime to buy food.

## 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>The school expects their children to work hard and to do well.</li> <li>Their children are making good progress.</li> <li>Extra-curricular provision is very good.</li> <li>They think that their children are being helped to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>They feel at ease if they need to approach the school with problems.</li> <li>Teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some parents think that arrangements for homework are unsatisfactory.</li> </ul>



The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents. The concerns of some parents about homework are not endorsed by the findings of the inspection. A homework timetable has been provided since the last inspection and homework is set regularly.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **The school's outstanding commitment to its pupils enables them to achieve highly.**

1. A great strength of the school is the intense commitment of staff at all levels of responsibility to care for pupils. Pupils gain direction, belief in themselves and confidence to achieve their best, from the many worthwhile opportunities that the school provides.
2. The school is very effective in ensuring that pupils attend regularly to take up the extensive educational opportunities on offer. Staff are rigorous in managing attendance, which is well above average as a result. School attendance staff are active in contacting parents and visiting homes to ensure that those pupils who might otherwise miss school achieve regular attendance. Senior year tutors and form tutors monitor pupils' attendance and performance closely. Pupils with particular attendance problems receive support and mentoring from their peers.
3. The school identifies all pupils' individual needs and is forceful and vigorous in meeting these. For example, learning mentors – staff who support pupils identified as having difficulties in taking full advantage of their opportunities at school – are highly committed to the pupils that they support. They work hard with some 50 individuals each week, helping to give these pupils the self-belief, confidence and sense of responsibility to make the most of their opportunities and talents.
4. The commitment of staff is shown in the support that is provided for all pupils to help them with their work. For example, the learning centre is open to pupils throughout the day, and some staff are available to pupils for one and a half hours before the start of morning school and after school hours. Sixteen adult volunteers – including teachers, staff who work with pupils with learning difficulties, technicians and the librarian – assist many pupils to improve their reading each morning before school begins. Pupils greatly value the opportunity to read to adults and to each other and gain a sense of achievement. Staff are sensitive and supportive. They praise and encourage pupils to achieve well. Analysis of results of reading tests indicates that pupils make good progress and, in many cases, achieve a standard of reading that enables them to manage their work in all subjects with confidence. The commitment of staff to ensuring that all pupils achieve their best is also shown in the support given to Year 11 pupils by subject teachers. For example, it is regular practice for teachers to give time after school and in the holidays to assist pupils who are preparing for GCSE examinations. Pupils greatly appreciate these opportunities and many take good advantage of them, as results show.
5. Senior tutors and tutors provide very well for pupils' needs. Tutors stay with their forms throughout the school, where possible, and this helps to ensure very good relationships between pupils and tutors. Bullying, oppressive behaviour or harassment are quickly and effectively dealt with, as both pupils and parents acknowledge. Pupils' progress and wellbeing are closely monitored. Tutors meet pupils once each term to review progress, identify areas of under-performance and to set targets for improvement. Pupils report that they find the process helpful and appreciate the guidance of staff, giving them confidence to raise any concerns or problems that they have.

6. The school vigorously tackles any matter likely to have an adverse effect on pupils' wellbeing. For example, the school's concern over the use of drugs has led not only to advising and warning pupils about harmful substances, but police with a sniffer dog are regularly invited to the school to make certain that pupils have had no contact with drugs. The school is concerned that the inadequate accommodation available for dining results in many pupils leaving the school site at lunchtimes, where they lack the care and supervision they would receive were they to remain in school.
7. Lessons in personal, social and health education, as part of the tutorial programme, extend pupils' knowledge and experience very well. For example, during the inspection a school governor, a representative of the police and one from the Samaritans helped to extend Year 11 pupils' knowledge and understanding of aspects of life and society of direct concern to them as citizens.
8. The care and commitment of the school to pupils includes the expectation that they will behave responsibly and achieve what they should – and they do. Pupils achieve highly in the many areas of opportunity for personal accomplishment that the school provides. However, the school is not only for those who can achieve at the highest academic or sporting levels, although many do so. For example, in sport, many individuals compete at county and national levels. The school is committed to supporting all pupils to achieve at their own highest level in all that they attempt. It recognises the wide range of their achievements by praise and public recognition, as in assemblies where individuals are warmly congratulated on their many different achievements, for example in service to the community, by staff and other pupils. The headteacher regularly writes to many pupils to recognise and praise their achievements, informing parents of their children's success. The process of recognising effort in all lessons with the award of merit marks as, for example in pupils' personal planners (records of their work and achievements), indicates the commitment of all to encourage every pupil to achieve highly.
9. In academic work, the school's commitment and determination that pupils should achieve their very best leads to their attaining very well. Pupils attain average standards in Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations, in comparison with those of all schools. However, when compared with standards achieved by schools of a similar type, their performance is well above average. This comparison applied in 2001; and these standards have been sustained since the last inspection. The five-year trend in results, based on the average point scores that are attained in both Year 9 National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations, indicates a more rapid rate of improvement than that which has taken place nationally. These results show considerable improvement in the standards attained by pupils of very differing levels of competence and that all achieve very well. Pupils across the full range of ability are encouraged to achieve highly. Those of high competence achieve very well and in 2001, for example, pupils attained the school's highest percentage of GCSE A\* and A grades. In the same year, a very high percentage of pupils gained five or more A\* to G grades and the school was judged to be among the top five per cent of similar schools - an outstanding performance.

**Leadership and management are very good. The leadership team has the confidence of staff, parents, pupils and the community, and is taking the school forward with excellent initiatives to extend pupils' learning.**

10. The leadership of the headteacher and the leadership group of senior staff is very good. They work very well together and are an effective team. They are very committed to pupils and staff, encouraging, supporting and expecting high standards. The headteacher, who joined the school in May 2000, has built effectively on the good work of his predecessor and is challenging pupils and staff to aim high, have confidence in themselves and to achieve their best. He and his senior colleagues have the confidence of pupils and staff and provide the school with active, energetic and effective leadership. They have the confidence of governors, whose commitment to ensuring the school's success is equally strong. Parents recognise that the school is well led and the vast majority of those responding to the questionnaire prior to the inspection and those attending the meeting for parents strongly endorse the quality of leadership.
11. There is no complacency in this school. The school's leaders and managers are not content to live with the successes of the present. There is high but realistic expectation of further improvement. Although there has been a change of headteacher since the last inspection, the impetus for further improvement has grown even stronger. The expectation that each pupil should achieve her or his best has become even more explicit in the mission statement of the school.
12. Leadership has taken the school forward very well since its last inspection in March 1997. For example, the trend in results per pupil, shown in the average point scores attained in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations, has risen significantly above the national rate of improvement. Accommodation has improved substantially. The excellent new performance hall gives much better opportunities for pupils to give public performances, for example in drama, music and talent shows, and for use by the community. Learning resources have greatly improved and the new learning centre and library give pupils and teachers much better access to books and computers. Many more modern computers are now available throughout the school and pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology have developed considerably because of improved teaching and equipment.
13. The key issues of the last inspection have been resolved very well. Monitoring of teaching and departmental performance has become established practice, with the intention of providing the highest quality of education to help pupils to achieve their best. Action to rectify underperformance has been vigorous to give pupils every opportunity to be successful. Newly appointed heads of subject departments that were previously judged to be underachieving are achieving improved standards of work in those subjects. Performance management has been successfully introduced to support the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Teachers' individual professional targets link well with the priorities of the school and all new staff receive very good support and induction to enable them to contribute well. The school has recently achieved recognition as an Investor in People. Monitoring of pupils' performance and supportive mentoring are in place to help and encourage them to achieve highly. The setting of academic targets for individual pupils is more consistent and data are used well by departments. Pupils' rate of attendance is now well above average. Homework is set to the published timetable and provides pupils with worthwhile activities to extend their learning beyond the classroom. The very good progress that has been made in resolving the key issues of the inspection of 1997 shows the very good capacity of the school's leadership and management to take the school even further forward, at a pace no less brisk than that of the last five years.
14. The headteacher, leadership group and governors have led the school to undertake worthwhile initiatives to extend pupils' learning and achievement. For example, the

school is participating in the national Excellence in Cities initiative and is providing an impressive range of activities beyond the usual curriculum to raise the aspirations of pupils identified as gifted or talented in particular subjects. In art and design, for example, additional classes outside the normal timetable are provided with specialist professional artists, to help pupils to extend their subject skills. As a result, some pupils take GCSE examinations in art and design in Year 10, and take their skills to a much higher level in Year 11. In physical education, specialist coaches provide masterclasses to enable talented pupils to extend their skills well beyond the limits set by the tuition that is usually available. Masterclasses have been held in basketball and trampolining during the last year, for example. Opportunities have been made available across the curriculum to raise pupils' aspirations to achieve excellence in a wide range of subjects. For example, special classes extend learning opportunities by enabling pupils to take additional GCSE subjects, as in history. Extra tuition helps those with particular subject talents to attain the highest GCSE grade – as in modern foreign languages and science. Visits to see performances of high quality have given pupils a sense that effort, commitment, confidence and talent can enable them to achieve excellence themselves. Some Years 10 and 11 pupils, for example, had the opportunity to attend a Royal Ballet workshop and learn to appreciate how to perform at the highest levels.

15. The school's leaders are determined that pupils should have high expectations of what they can achieve. Much encouragement is given by the Excellence in Cities initiatives and, also, by the guidance that pupils receive when making choices and decisions concerning their future careers and educational opportunities after age 16. Many pupils have been able to visit universities to get a better understanding of the opportunities that higher education provides. For example, pupils have visited Lancaster University and current Year 11 pupils are soon to visit the University of Sunderland. The school compares most favourably with those which have sixth-form provision in helping pupils to understand what opportunities exist for them and to give them the appropriate ambition to make the most of their abilities and talents.
16. Not only is the school led very well, it is also very well managed. For example, the school improvement plan efficiently identifies the correct areas for further development, which relate closely to helping pupils to achieve highly and to have proper pride in the school for what it enables them to achieve. Resources to support the realisation of objectives are identified and the means to evaluate the impact of change are, usually, but not always, clearly stated. The success of extending pupils' opportunities for learning is to be measured by closely analysing the examination results attained. Planned initiatives to extend the opportunities for gifted and talented pupils are very well managed and financial control is meticulous. As a result of the headteacher's appointment and the formation of a new leadership group, the school improvement plan is mainly limited to the timescale of the current year. However, the plan is a useful, informative and concise statement of priorities.

**Teaching is good overall; much is very good and some is excellent, enabling pupils to learn successfully.**

*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.*

17. The vast majority of the 63 lessons seen in Years 7 to 11 were of, at least, good quality. Almost one in three lessons were of very good or higher quality, with some that were excellent in mathematics, art and design, dance, English and information and communication technology. Teaching was of similar quality for all age groups. No subject was poorly taught. Teaching meets the needs of pupils of different academic potential and from different social and ethnic backgrounds very well. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. A result of good teaching is that pupils learn effectively and make good progress throughout the school. They increase their knowledge, understanding and skills well in all subjects. Some lessons are very enjoyable learning experiences. As a result, pupils achieve very well and standards in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE examinations are well above those of schools of a similar type.
18. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They give them confidence to achieve well. Pupils respond well to the challenge of demanding tasks and work hard in the vast majority of lessons. For example, in a very good lesson on quadratic formulae in algebra, Year 11 pupils were challenged extremely well so that they began to investigate the topic for themselves. An excellent Year 8 information and communication technology lesson enabled pupils to produce a questionnaire to research the attitudes of the public towards setting up a new supermarket. The pupils were expected to use their initiative and their skills in the subject to complete the assignment, and they responded well. Teachers' high expectations of pupils result in imaginative and productive work. This enables pupils to achieve very well at their different levels of attainment and to make good progress in gaining further subject knowledge, understanding and skills.
19. The good skills that teachers have in managing the work and behaviour of their classes ensure that pupils make the most of the time available in lessons to extend their learning. Pupils recognise the strong commitment that teachers have towards them and relationships between them are very good in most lessons. In an excellent Year 11 art and design lesson, for example, the teacher managed the class exceptionally well through mutual understanding and expectation that the work which was undertaken on graphic design was rigorous, precise and of high quality. A shared love and respect for the discipline of the subject created a learning partnership between teacher and pupils and led to them working with intense concentration to make very good progress. In a Year 11 lesson on systems and control in design and technology, very good relationships enabled the teacher to direct the work of individual pupils very well. As a result, pupils' attitudes to their work were very good and all concentrated very well on individual projects.
20. Teachers choose methods well to enable pupils to learn and to make the progress that they should. In modern foreign language lessons, for example, teachers' questions make pupils of differing abilities think for themselves and check the accuracy of their responses. Teachers often use information and communication technology effectively, for example to enhance and speed their presentations to their classes. In some lessons, teachers use interactive whiteboards with skill and confidence. For example, in a Year 11 humanities lesson intended to help pupils to revise their knowledge of euthanasia in preparation for the coming GCSE examination, the teacher presented information very clearly to the pupils and captured their interest very well. He included the format of a popular media quiz show that pupils immediately recognised, and with which they actively participated. The teacher's skill and imagination with the technology made the work fun, and showed pupils how they could work together when revising. Teachers have good subject expertise and the confidence to demonstrate skills that help pupils to appreciate what the practice of a subject discipline involves. For example, the teacher of a boys' volleyball lesson demonstrated techniques very well to enable the

pupils to learn the skills required correctly. Teachers ensure that all participate in the learning activities that they organise, by allocating tasks to small groups, or by pairing pupils to work together.

21. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons effectively. Objectives are made clear to pupils at the start of lessons so that they know what they should achieve within the time available. For example, in a very good Year 11 biology lesson on evolution and reproduction, a class containing pupils of varying competence in science extended their learning very well; teacher and pupils knew what was to be achieved and worked hard together to accomplish it. However, planning in some lessons does not always sufficiently distinguish the needs of the most talented pupils, although teachers meet these very well in activities outside the normal timetable. Teachers' very good understanding of course requirements for GCSE examinations informs the planning of lessons.
22. Learning resources and support staff are used very well by teachers to extend pupils' learning. Support assistants are deployed very well in class to assist many individual pupils and are well aware of their needs. Computers, video and overhead projectors are used regularly to enable teachers to extend pupils' understanding of the topic. The locality was used effectively as a resource in a very good Year 7 poetry lesson, in which the 1883 Victoria Hall disaster in Sunderland when many children died, was used as inspiration and stimulus to which the pupils responded very well, with sensitive reflection on this situation from a parent's perspective.
23. Homework is regularly set and generally marked thoroughly. The process enables pupils to extend their learning beyond lessons well. Homework is often challenging and requires initiative and the practice of subject skills.
24. Pupils respond very well to the good, and much very good, teaching that they receive. They learn successfully because they have very good relationships with teachers, concentrate in almost all lessons and work hard.

**Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave well because they gain confidence from very good relationships and make the most of their opportunities.**

25. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They have pride in their school and are keen to share their good impressions of it with others. They concentrate on their work in class and make good progress in the vast majority of lessons. In almost all lessons, they behave well in response to good teaching. They act responsibly around the school when they are not directly supervised. The mature sense of responsibility of the members of the school council is impressive in the commitment they give to making the school even better. Very good relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers enable pupils to make the most of their opportunities in class and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available.

**The learning opportunities that are provided for pupils are very good, and include an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.**

26. The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities through its extensive curriculum. Links with primary school were described as excellent in the inspection of 1997; they are now even stronger. Subject teachers provide lessons for pupils of local primary schools before they transfer to give them a good idea of the work they will follow in Year 7. For example, an excellent range of opportunities is provided in sport to extend pupils' skills. In art and design, an advanced skills teacher provides specialist teaching

in a local primary school and supports the teachers there in developing their own skills in the subject. Science teachers teach Year 6 classes to help pupils gain a better understanding of the demands of future work in the subject. There has been very good work to ensure a smooth transition while continuing to support pupils' development of literacy and numeracy. The pupils benefit greatly and transfer into the school with enhanced subject knowledge and skills.

27. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 gives all pupils experience of drama, dance and two modern foreign languages, in addition to the required subjects of the National Curriculum. A very good range of learning opportunities is provided in Years 10 and 11; for example, vocational subjects extend pupils' options well. An excellent feature is that the needs of pupils who find normal school too difficult to manage in Year 11 are given particular consideration. An alternative curriculum is provided to meet their needs and runs partly in a neighbouring school. A Youth Award Scheme supports pupils' personal development well and enables them to gain worthwhile vocational experience with qualifications to benefit them in the future.
28. Pupils benefit from an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities. Many teachers give their time willingly to provide these for pupils. The initiatives for gifted and talented pupils complement the mainstream curriculum, but the breadth of provision overall goes well beyond what is normally provided and, altogether, is of exceptionally high quality. Parents recognise the quality of provision, and over half of the exceptionally high percentage of those responding to the questionnaire prior to the inspection give the provision of extra-curricular opportunities the highest rating possible. During the inspection, many subject clubs and groups met and musical and sporting activities took place. Provision extends pupils' experience exceptionally well. Many trips and visits are provided, some of which give broadening residential experience. The range of sports and the arts provided is impressive, raises pupils' aspirations and encourages them to achieve highly. The school's regular productions combine drama, music and dance in much appreciated public performances.

**The school ensures that pupils and the community benefit greatly from the opportunities it provides as a sports college.**

29. The school's status as a sports college, which has recently been renewed for a further three years, enriches the experience of all pupils and greatly benefits the community. Sports college status attracts additional funding which increases the range of sporting activities provided and the quality of accommodation and resources. The school was the first sports college in the north of England and the impact of this aspect of its work is considerable and now very well established. The sports college has a very positive influence on developing pupils' sporting abilities at all levels. Although there are particular opportunities for talented pupils in sport, all have the opportunity and encouragement to enhance their physical skills, fitness and confidence to benefit them as individuals in whatever they attempt – in sport or in academic work. The extensive range of in-school sports clubs and school teams provides opportunity and encouragement for all pupils to participate. Clubs are open to all players and make use of the impressive indoor and outdoor accommodation for games and sports throughout the year. For example, pupils other than those in school teams use the excellent Astro-turf and tennis court facilities extensively for recreation. All pupils benefit equally from the impressive accommodation and sports equipment available.
30. Support for talented pupils in a wide range of sports and games is impressive in its rigour and scope. Provision of specialist coaches, in basketball and gymnastics for example, to help pupils to enhance their skills, is an established practice and enables

them to perform at higher levels. Masterclasses are held in tennis. Talented pupils are also taught essential performance skills that they can then use in a wide range of games and sports. A particularly impressive feature of the sports college's provision is the Junior Athletes' Education programme, with the Institute of Youth Sport. This arrangement helps pupils to manage the demands of their game or sport and the stress of competition, but it also helps them to manage the requirements of their academic work alongside these other demands on their time and energy. Pupils and parents are very appreciative of the guidance provided, so that achievement can be both physical and intellectual. Some 45 pupils benefit from the programme. Pupils of all ages perform at a high level in a wide range of sports and games and many achieve local and regional success. Some achieve outstanding national success.

31. The community gains considerably from the opportunities provided by the sports college. Local primary schools benefit greatly from the range of activities that are provided. A specialist physical education teacher, employed jointly by the sports college and the local education authority, works with local partner primary schools, helping pupils to develop their skills in sports and games. Some primary pupils have gained also from masterclasses in tennis, gymnastics and in developing those skills that they can use in a wide range of games and sports. Primary schools note improvement in pupils' performance in physical education as a result of the input from the sports college.
32. The sports college is of great benefit to the pupils of the school and to the community throughout the Sunderland Education Action Zone. It has an enviable national reputation and is a beacon for community sports development. The college is a centre for community sport in Washington. It is the base for the sports co-ordinator programme in the Sunderland Education Action Zone. This programme provides opportunities and expertise for pupils from 22 primary and three other secondary schools. The accommodation and facilities of the sports college are made available to this programme, which gives a wide range of sporting opportunities to neighbouring institutions. The sports college provides a base for the training of heads of departments of physical education from local schools. Accommodation and facilities also greatly benefit local clubs and groups who take the opportunity to use this impressive local resource.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **Dining accommodation**

33. Much of the school's accommodation is very good and some is excellent. The new block containing a performance hall, learning centre and accommodation for music, for example, is impressive. Most accommodation is good and some areas for improvement, as in design and technology, have been identified. However, dining accommodation is inadequate. The space provided for dining at lunchtime is too small for a school of this size. Many pupils are accommodated in classrooms to eat packed lunches, but others wait patiently in long queues to buy their lunch. It is not possible, with these dining facilities, for the school to provide more lunches. Consequently, many pupils leave the school site at lunchtime. Some go home for lunch, but many use local shops and local streets. The headteacher and senior staff respond quickly to any concerns expressed by local residents and are often personally present in the locality at



this time, but pupils cannot be supervised as well as they would be if they remained on site.

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

34. In order for the school to improve its provision even further, the leadership of governors, headteacher and leadership group should:
- extend the energy and skill that they have employed so successfully to improve the school's buildings and facilities in recent years to enlarge the dining hall so that all pupils can be better accommodated at lunchtime. (*See paragraph 33*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATOR

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

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	21	40	30	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages, as each lesson represents less than one percentage point. Figures do not total 100 because of rounding.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1072	0
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	124	0

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	175	0

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	8.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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	111	98	209

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	58	79	77
	Girls	67	68	64
	Total	125	147	141
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	60 (62)	70 (66)	67 (63)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (27)	40 (38)	33 (30)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	66	81	86
	Girls	76	67	62
	Total	142	148	148
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (69)	71 (65)	71 (69)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (27)	39 (41)	30 (41)
	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 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	103	115	218

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	31	100	102
	Girls	53	111	112
	Total	84	211	217
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (47)	97 (95)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	38.8

per pupil	National	39.0
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1070
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	2
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)	69.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	639

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.6
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.4
Key Stage 4	20.1

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	3,459,891
Total expenditure	3,515,879
Expenditure per pupil	2,907
Balance brought forward from previous year	88,126
Balance carried forward to next year	32,138

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1072
Number of questionnaires returned	674

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	55	8	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	54	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	52	9	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	58	14	4	1
The teaching is good.	31	60	5	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	49	10	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	38	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	31	54	10	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	36	52	3	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	52	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	40	3	1	4

*Figures may not total 100 because of rounding.*

### Other issues raised by parents

The parents who attended the meeting before the inspection were very supportive of the school and very pleased with the standards that their children were achieving.