

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **QUARRYDALE SCHOOL**

Sutton-in-Ashfield

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122840

Headteacher: Mr A J Flintham

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton  
4492

Dates of inspection: 12 – 16 February 2001

Inspection number: 193468

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: County

Age range of pupils: 11 – 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stoneyford Road  
Sutton-in-Ashfield  
Nottinghamshire

Postcode: NG17 2DU

Telephone number: 01623 554 178

Fax number: 01623 517 814

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Hague

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4492	Mr J Ashton	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Equal opportunities.	The school's results and achievements; How well are pupils taught? Leadership and management.
19730	Mr R Folks	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils attitudes, values and personal development; How well the school cares for its pupils; How well the school works in partnership with parents.
10361	Mr F Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	English and drama; English as an additional language.	Literacy.
3643	Mr D Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Numeracy.
23246	Mr J Mitchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
12242	Ms E Needham	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.	
31129	Mr J Pickering	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design.	
30899	Mr K Boden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
11300	Mr B Smith	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Special educational needs.	
10275	Dr J Cosgrove	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	Curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils.
27082	Mr G Henshall	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	Sixth Form provision.
11672	Mr P Harle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
17987	Mr B Coates	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	
23480	Ms M Harding	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision.

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane*

*London*  
*SW11 3AD*

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>8</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN</b>	<b>36</b>

## **AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Quarrydale School is an 11 to 18 year olds mixed comprehensive school with 997 pupils on roll, 78 of whom are in the Sixth Form. There are roughly equal numbers of boys and girls, except in Year 8 where boys predominate. The school serves the ex-mining and textile community of Sutton-in-Ashfield in Nottinghamshire, in which unemployment is relatively high, well below national averages of adults have higher education qualifications and fewer than average pupils live in high social class housing. The school draws pupils mainly from five primary schools, but also admits a significant number of pupils from other secondary schools, many of whom have had difficulties in their schooling elsewhere. Very few of its pupils are of an ethnic minority, and even fewer are at an early stage of learning English. National tests at the end of primary school and the school's own assessments indicate that attainment on entry to the school is heavily weighted to below average, although there are also some higher attaining pupils.

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

Quarrydale School is an improving school, but there is still much to be done, at a faster pace than it has been moving. The level of success in the 2000 GCSE examinations earned the school a place in the top 100 improving schools in the country. On the other hand, national test results at the end of Year 9 remain stubbornly below average, even compared to schools with similar social intakes. Teaching and learning are good overall, but weaknesses due to intermittent and long-term staff absence are hindering pupils' achievements in some subjects. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but there are aspects of management that need sharpening, for example school development planning and the deployment of senior managers. The school provides satisfactory value for the money it receives.

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

- GCSE results overall were much improved in 2000, matching the national average in grades A\* to C, which is a significant improvement on previous years results.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good.
- There is strong extra curricular provision, particularly, but not only in physical education and music.
- Relationships are good.
- The school cares well for its pupils.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.
- Arrangements to minimise permanent exclusion from the school are effective.
- Procedures for the induction and professional development of staff are good.
- Financial control is efficient.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- Standards of attainment, especially but not exclusively of boys, are too low at the end of Year 9.
- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT), resistant materials and French are not high enough overall, especially by the end of Year 11.
- Occasional and long-term staff absences are hindering pupils' achievements in some subjects.
- Some statutory requirements are not fulfilled, for example, ICT entitlement and RE in Years 10 and 11 and in the Sixth Form.
- School improvement planning is not sharp enough.
- Senior managers are not deployed effectively enough to monitor teaching and learning and the day-to-day working of departments, in order to raise standards further.
- Sixth form provision is not cost effective.
- The time allowed for lessons is too long and not always used well enough.

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

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

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection report in 1997, but there are issues raised then which have yet to be resolved:

- \* The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Fewer lessons are unsatisfactory and larger proportions are judged to be very good.
- \* Levels of attainment have been raised in mathematics, music, art, and in religious education (RE) at Key Stage 3, but not in resistant materials, and not sufficiently in ICT and French.
- \* Most of the statutory requirements lacking last time are now in place.
- \* More suitable learning materials have been developed for lower attaining pupils.
- \* Opportunities for vocational education remain relatively undeveloped.
- \* The monitoring and evaluation of the work of departments is a varied picture. It is much improved in some areas of the school, but less so in others.
- \* Attendance has risen year-on-year since the last inspection and is now close to the national average, although unauthorised absence is higher than average.

## STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A Level/AS Level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	E	E	D	D
A Levels/AS Levels	E*	E	E	N/A

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E
<i>very low</i>	E*

- \* By the end of Year 9 in 2000, mathematics and science results in the national tests were below the national averages whilst in English they were well below average. Girls outperformed boys in all three subjects. The overall trend of improvement from year to year is below that found nationally;
- \* By the end of Year 9, pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily in most subjects, better than expected in music, but less well than expected in ICT;
- \* The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A\* to C grades was close to the national average. Average GCSE points scores were below the national average, but they improved upon the previous three years' scores, which were all well below average. This represents significant progress for this group of pupils. Quarrydale was listed in the top one hundred improving schools nationally in 2000;
- \* The school met its agreed target for A\* to G grades, and greatly exceeded its target for five or more A\* to C grades. It exceeded its target for average points score by one percentage point. The performance of girls was generally better than that of boys in GCSE examinations, continuing the pattern of the previous year;
- \* Standards in literacy are satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 4, and pupils' competence in dealing with the everyday demands of numeracy is sound;
- \* By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve at least satisfactorily in every subject, except ICT where they achieve less well than expected, and in art and music where they achieve better than expected;
- \* At A Level in 2000, the average points score at 10.8 points was well below the national average of 18.2 points. This was similar to the results of 1999, but better than those of 1998. Girls outperformed boys significantly in 2000, though relative performances were closer in 1999;
- \* By the end of the Sixth Form, students generally achieve satisfactorily in all subjects studied, except in mathematics in 2000 where they achieved better than expected.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils generally make the most of the opportunities provided for them. Good attendance at the extra curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Where it falls short of this it is almost always well controlled. The need for permanent exclusion of pupils is minimised by an effective deterrent system of escalating temporary exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are a strength of the school. Opportunities for personal development are satisfactory and improving.
Attendance	Improved steadily in recent years and is now much closer to the national average although still unsatisfactory, and unauthorised absence is above average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	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 overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and has improved since the previous inspection. Ninety seven per cent of the 156 lessons inspected were judged to be at least satisfactory, with just 3 per cent unsatisfactory. Thirty two per cent of lessons were satisfactory, 52 per cent were good, and 12 per cent were very good;
- \* Teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics at both key stages and in the Sixth Form. In science, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form;
- \* Instances of very good teaching are still relatively few, and are mainly in English, mathematics, science, history, and modern foreign languages;
- \* Staff absences due to illness, and the difficulties of sometimes not being able to recruit suitable supply teachers, are hindering the continuity of pupils' learning in, for example, mathematics and resistant materials;
- \* Over-long lessons are causing some pupils' energies and attention to flag in the last 15 minutes of many lessons;
- \* The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are being well taught.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good extra-curricular provision. Curricular provision is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but in Years 10 and 11, pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to ICT or RE, and there is too little vocational provision.
Provision for pupils with SEN	Good, especially in withdrawal lessons in the SEN department.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The pupils concerned are making steady progress in the mastery of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' social and moral development is good. Provision for their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Collective worship does not take place for every pupil on every day.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are well cared for. The school has good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of its pupils. The personal development of pupils is monitored effectively, but there is room for improvement in their academic target setting, especially at Key Stage 3.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. They are satisfied on the whole with the standards and achievements of the school. However, parents would like to know how their children are achieving compared with other children nationally and sometimes do not understand this from the information given to them by the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall but with areas for improvement. The headteacher manages the school well in a calm and systematic way. The senior management team is capable but could be better deployed. Pastoral leadership is strong. Leadership is very good in some subjects (English, mathematics and history) but the co-ordination of resistant materials and of ICT is weak.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory overall. The governing body supports the school well, through its regular meetings and the work of its committees, but is less actively involved in other aspects of the work of the school than many governors elsewhere and is not fulfilling all its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. It is stronger on diagnosing what needs to be improved than at working out how to bring this improvement about.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. Principles of best value are applied satisfactorily, for example in ordering goods and services, but not in evaluating the best use of teaching and learning time or the deployment of key staff.

The number of staff, including support staff, is adequate for the needs of the curriculum in most subject areas. However, the long-term absence of some staff and difficulties over recruitment of suitable supply teachers are having an adverse impact on standards in some areas.

The amount of money set aside for learning resources has been increased to 6 per cent of the total school budget this year. However, there are shortages of materials for teaching and learning in art and music, and some shortages of ICT equipment and software that prevent its use in some areas.

The accommodation is in the main clean and well cared for. The ageing building is appropriate for its function but is badly showing its age in parts.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
They believe that their children are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expected to work hard.</li><li>• Well taught.</li><li>• Make good progress at the school.</li></ul>	A significant proportion of parents would like the school to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work more closely with parents.</li><li>• Keep them better informed about how their children are getting on.</li><li>• Set more homework for their children.</li></ul>

The inspection team found that pupils are expected to work hard, are well taught and make satisfactory progress at the school. The school tries very hard to involve parents more in working with the school. Appropriate homework was set during the inspection, though pupils interviewed said that it could be scheduled better. There are improvements that could be made to keep parents better informed of their children's progress, but these are limited by staff reluctance as a result of national union action over workload to allow more than one parents' evening for each year group per year.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment on entry to the school year-on-year is consistently well below average. Literacy and numeracy skills, in particular, are very low. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected National Curriculum Level 4 or higher at the end of Year 6 in the primary school is well below average in all three of the core subjects English, mathematics and science.
2. By the end of Year 9 in the Year 2000, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected Level 5 and above were still well below the national average in English, and were below average in mathematics and science. Teacher assessments in other subjects are that pupils are below national expectations except in history and RE, where they match national expectations. Girls outperformed boys in all three of the core subjects in 2000, as they did in previous years.
3. Average GCSE points scores in 2000 were below the national average but were an improvement on the previous three years' scores, which were all well below average. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\* to C grades was close to the national average. This represents significant progress for this group of pupils. Quarrydale School was listed in the top one hundred improving schools nationally in 2000. The performance of girls is generally better than that of boys in GCSE examinations. The relatively poor performance of boys is due in large measure to significant levels of absence in the run up to examination time. Additionally, a significant proportion of boys joins the school from other schools at a time which disrupts the continuity of their education. Other factors that affect attainment of pupils overall are some long term and intermittent staff illness, and the difficulties of attracting appropriately qualified supply teachers, as with many other schools nationally.
4. English Language GCSE results in 2000 were average at grades A\* to C and at grades A\* to G. Boys' results were below the national average for boys while girls' results were just above the national average for girls. These results were a significant improvement on the GCSE results for 1999, which were well below national averages. They show the steady improvement that pupils are beginning to make in English as they progress through the school. Mathematics results are in line with the national average for pupils with grades A\* to C. The achievement of girls is good because their attainment is above the national average for girls. However the attainment of boys is below the national average for boys. It is also below the national average for the number of boys with grades A\* to G. Science GCSE results were below average for grades A\* to C but close to average for grades A\* to G. Girls outperformed boys by a greater margin than at Key Stage 3 and achieved results that are just below the national average for girls, whereas boys were significantly below the average for boys. The results in 2000 for science were slightly better than in 1999, and they have improved significantly since the last inspection.

5. At A Level, the average points score at 10.8 in 2000 was well below the national average of 18.2 points. This was similar to the results of 1999, but better than those of 1998. Girls outperformed boys significantly in 2000, though relative performances were closer in 1999. Numbers of entries in most subjects have been consistently low. Only in English did they reach double figures in 2000, and in 1999 the highest entry, again in English, was seven students. The numbers of students taking vocational courses was even lower, and success rates were moderate in most cases.

6. Pupils enter the school with weak literacy skills. Standards in literacy are still below the expected level by the end of Key Stage 3, but they are satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 4. In English and other subjects, notably humanities, good teaching promotes literacy development. Pupils speak clearly and with confidence. In art and music, for example, pupils use the subject language correctly. They ask questions and give answers confidently, though in some subjects, such as geography, these answers tend to be short. Pupils read well enough to help their learning in all subjects. Pupils' writing skills are developed in English, to the benefit of other subjects. Listening skills are good in English, modern foreign languages and music, but weaker in some subjects where a combination of low attainment and the long double period means that pupils' attention span is too short to cope.

7. Numeracy standards do not meet the expected level by the end of Key Stage 3, but pupils' competence in dealing with the everyday demands of numeracy is sound by the end of Key Stage 4. It is adequate to support their work in science, for example. Pupils handle number and measurement, mentally, orally and in writing in a satisfactory manner. In design and technology, pupils engage in good discussion of measuring, practical measuring techniques, allowance and tolerance for fit. In mathematics, pupils of low attainment and those with SEN measure bearings accurately to one degree on a map, and use simple scales appropriately. Some difficulties remain for them, for instance in finding ten per cent of nine pounds. Calculators are used accurately and appropriately in design and technology, mathematics and science. Older pupils with higher attainment use scientific calculators well in mathematics. Spatial concepts are applied soundly in art and design and in technology. Pupils make good sense of information presented numerically and graphically in history, where good use is made of 1841 census figures in data handling. Pupils handle statistical information in everyday contexts well, such as in course work in ICT when information is taken from the Internet and presented for review.

8. Many pupils on the school's register of special needs have very low attainment, and a higher number have more severe difficulties than generally found. In a maths lesson in the special needs department, for instance, six of the fourteen pupils from Key Stage 3 had not yet reached Level 1 of the National Curriculum, though Level 5 is the national expectation for their age group. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in the learning centre. As far as possible, they follow subject schemes of work, during which skills are reinforced, especially in literacy and numeracy. Careful consideration is given to the three English attainment targets. Core subject inspectors acknowledge the progress made in Years 7 and 8 and in the mathematics group previously mentioned, all but two pupils gained National Curriculum

Levels of 3 and 4 by Year 9. Despite some concern that pupils may not be able to easily accomplish the transfer from SEN withdrawal groups to mainstream classes, pupils studying English were able to gain D, E and F grades at GCSE. At the least, subject inspectors report satisfactory progress across both key stages and the majority report good progress.

9. By the end of Year 9 in 2000, pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily. They make satisfactory progress compared to their prior attainment, although this progress is sometimes not reflected in greatly improved performance in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests. In music, pupils achieve better than expected and make good progress across this key stage. Pupils achieve less well than expected in ICT.

10. By the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, pupils achieve at least satisfactorily compared to their prior attainment in every subject, except ICT, French and the resistant materials aspect of design and technology, where they achieve less well than expected. In art and design, German and music, they achieve better than expected.

11. By the end of the Sixth Form, students achieve at least satisfactorily compared to their prior attainment on entry to the Sixth Form. In mathematics, they achieved better than expected in 2000.

12. The school has very few pupils for whom English is an additional language, and only one is at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school provides some opportunities for supported speaking and listening in class, and the pupils are making satisfactory progress.

13. In 2000, the school achieved its performance targets for the proportion of pupils gaining at least five GCSE grades A\* to C and at least one A\* to G grade. It exceeded its target for an average points score of 33 by one percentage point. All three of these results are a considerable improvement on the equivalent results for 1999, representing significant added value, especially for the large proportion of pupils in this year group who were achieving at well below average levels for their age when they entered the school in Year 7.

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

14. Quarrydale pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is satisfactory overall. Relationships within the school are good and personal development is satisfactory. Attendance has improved since the last inspection but is still unsatisfactory.

15. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and taking part in the range of activities available, especially sport and music. They make the most of the many opportunities provided. They socialise well and their friendliness is apparent at all times. Sometimes, however, their behaviour becomes exuberant and is often noisy in the narrow corridors when moving between lessons. Despite this noisiness, there is never any sign of oppressive behaviour, and there is a general air of cheerfulness in the school which is very evident in assemblies. Pupils help each other and have respect for each other and for other people's feelings. They care for the school. This was apparent during a School Council meeting and at registration periods when feedback from the meeting was given.

16. Lunchtime arrangements have improved since the last inspection. Pupils, supervised by dinner supervisors and sometimes by teachers, now have access to their year group areas at lunchtimes, as well as to the playgrounds and to a good range of lunchtime activities. This has placed a responsibility on pupils to manage their own behaviour, which most of them live up to well. It works particularly well in the Year 9 area because staff and older pupils congregate together to make a harmonious family group. It works less well in the Year 7 area where the facilities are not as good and there is less adult supervision.

17. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall in lessons. Pupils apply themselves and maintain their concentration well. They work well collaboratively and individually. However, in some of the longer lessons, pupils are unable to maintain their attention fully for the whole period and become restless towards the end. Parents are satisfied with behaviour in general, though not quite as happy with the behaviour of the younger pupils. Bullying is dealt with well. Last year there were no permanent exclusions, though the school has good arrangements, with various levels of fixed term exclusions. This minimises the need to exclude pupils permanently, although this option still exists. The head teacher provides useful guidance to the local family of schools on these procedures.

18. The school gives pupils a number of opportunities to take responsibility during their time in the school, and these are satisfactory. These include duties at parents and open evenings when pupils receive the parents, demonstrate activities, act as guides and run the refreshments. For the first two weeks of attendance at school, Year 7 pupils are helped by older pupils to find their way around the school. Older pupils are involved in their own target setting, and produce their sheets during personal and social education (PSE) lessons. Some older pupils also act as referees during non-contact sports. There are classroom monitors, and older pupils again help at lunchtimes with Year 9 pupils. Some also return to their primary schools with the Primary School co-ordinator to help with the induction process for new pupils. On the other hand, there is no prefect or house system. The most significant and recent initiative is the Year and School Council system, which is proving to be a useful tool for resolving matters of concern and should further improve relationships within the school. Each year group has a council, and two representatives go to regular meetings of the School Council. Pupils demonstrated a mature approach in a meeting held during the inspection. The school choir visits old people's homes and pupils support a number of charities. Pupils raise significant funds for a variety of charities.

19. There are good relationships throughout the school between the pupils themselves and between pupils and staff. These relationships help to create a good learning ethos, and help considerably towards pupils' learning and personal development. They are considered to be a strength of the school.

20. Attendance has improved since the last inspection. It has gradually crept up year-on-year and is now much closer to the national average, although still unsatisfactory, especially since unauthorised absences are higher than the national average.

21. Pupils in the SEN department are well behaved. Most have a positive attitude to their work and to their teachers, with whom they have good relations and in whom they have confidence. They are eager to discuss their work and do so in positive terms. Inspectors commented on how well they worked and stayed on task whilst in the SEN area. Occasional lapses of attention are well

handled by staff.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

22. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Its overall quality has improved since the previous inspection, although instances of very good teaching are still relatively localised and few in total. One reason for the improvement since the last inspection is the school's involvement in an improving quality in educational achievement (IQEA) project with the University of Nottingham. This said, there are three factors that are lessening the effectiveness of the teaching in some departments. Staff absences due to illness, and the difficulties of sometimes not being able to recruit suitable supply teachers, are hindering the continuity of pupils' learning in, for example, mathematics and resistant materials. Over-long lessons are causing some pupils' energies and attention to flag in the last 15 minutes of many lessons. The lack of a consistent monitoring system of the quality of teaching and learning in every department is slowing down the detection of any relatively weak teaching. It is also preventing the sharing of good practice that would help satisfactory lessons to become good or better.

23. Ninety seven per cent of the 156 lessons inspected were judged to be at least satisfactory, with just 3 per cent unsatisfactory. Thirty two per cent of lessons were satisfactory, 52 per cent were good, and 12 per cent were very good. One English lesson was judged outstanding. More than one very good lesson was seen in each of English, mathematics, science, history, and modern foreign languages. Single examples of unsatisfactory lessons were observed in English (Year 8), ICT (Year 10), French (Year 11), RE (Year 8) and PSE (Year 9). The largest proportions of weaker teaching were seen in science across all year groups and in Years 7, 8, 9 and 11 in either resistant materials or graphics.

24. The better teaching is notable for the teachers' good command of their subjects (found in almost all subjects); the precise targets in their lesson plans and the high expectations they share with all their pupils. Notable also are the teachers' good management of pupils, their insistence always on high standards of behaviour, and their effective use of on-going assessment of pupils' work (especially in English and RE). Pupils in these good and very good lessons make substantial progress, their interest is captured and held well and their productivity is high. In some cases, in science and English for example, pupils also have a good awareness of how well they are doing and of what they need to do to improve.

25. A series of three very good chemistry lessons with Years 11, 12 and 13 respectively were notable for the teacher's very high expectations of what his pupils are capable of, together with his very good understanding of what they were likely to find difficult. Clever choice of language prevented the long chemical names from hindering understanding. Careful preparation and good use of worksheets, with just the right amount of theoretical background to hint as to what to expect, kept pupils on their toes, having to work some things out for themselves. Reflecting upon lessons learned from pupils' reactions in previous sessions, he prepared imaginative group work for the Year 13 class, who were becoming too dependent and needing him to spoon-feed them. This caused the students to have to raise their game as they collaborated in small groups to prepare a short presentation to the other groups on the relative merits of methanol, ethanol or petrol as a fuel for car engines.

26. Very good teaching and learning was also seen in a Year 9 history class as pupils made good use of data from the 1841 Census of the Skegby and Sutton area. This lesson, conducted in one of the ICT rooms, was very well prepared and clearly explained. It used material available on a specially constructed website. Busy, interested pupils, including those with SEN, were seen to be happily combining a genuine historical source-based activity with the acquisition of ICT skills.

27. An outstanding English lesson was seen with a higher attaining Year 10 group. The class teacher's obvious love of poetry and his lively and open approach generated considerable enthusiasm and interest. Well structured and timed activities moved the lesson along at a good pace, and thoroughly involved every pupil in productive group work as they looked at the language and imagery of a particular poem. In this way, they were enabled to get under the skin of the poem before producing their own personal response to it.

28. There were a relatively small number of unsatisfactory lessons. One English lesson involved a large group of lower attaining Year 8 pupils. The main problem was a group of about six noisy and restless boys, whose attention the teacher struggled and failed to hold completely towards the end of a long lesson on the keeping of a non-fiction diary. A small number of boys in a Year 10 ICT class were not clear enough about what they were doing and, finding the text they were using too difficult, responded with frustration and some misbehaviour. The tasks here were too open ended for a group that needed shorter-term challenges and more regular reinforcement through success. The group contained a wide range of attainment, but the lesson plan did not make enough allowance for this. A Year 11 French lesson on types of food eaten at various meals was unsatisfactory because the teacher made little attempt to catch the attention of a significant minority of pupils who had drifted completely off task. An unsatisfactory RE lesson with Year 8 was one of several RE lessons that ran out of steam towards the end, with 15 to 20 minutes left. A Year 9 PSE lesson about vandalism began well, with a useful video and follow-up group activities, but the teacher was unable to sustain pupils' interest for the complete lesson. Boredom set in, with consequent misbehaviour leading to less learning than ought to have taken place.

29. Pupils with SEN are all taught at Key Stage 3 within the SEN department by withdrawal from lessons. At Key Stage 4, they join mainstream classes and are sometimes supported by learning support assistants (LSAs) in individual departments. All pupils within the SEN department are provided with detailed programmes of study, which are thoroughly prepared and contain details of needs and targets. Those with more severe problems have, in addition, supplementary action plans. With the detailed information available on their pupils, teachers are able to provide a variety of activities with which to motivate and interest them. Individual education plans (IEPs) outside the SEN centre are the responsibility of the subject departments and do not always measure up to the quality of those used by SEN staff. Teaching within the SEN department is good, and techniques are both appropriate and effective.

Subject knowledge and planning are good. Teachers are infinitely patient and friendly. They constantly reinforce the messages being given and maintain a steady pace, expecting pupils to make an effort and to make progress. Rewarding relationships are built up and exploited for the benefit of the pupils.

30. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is a consistent thrust of the English curriculum. Close attention is paid to developing reading, writing and listening, which results in pupils achieving satisfactory standards by the end of Key Stage 4. Reading and drama lessons at Key Stage 3 encourage pupils to read and gain confidence in their speaking skills. The practice of drafting and redrafting written work at both key stages means that pupils of all levels of attainment develop extended writing skills. This, in turn, benefits other areas of the curriculum. Some weaknesses of spelling and structure remain, but these are vigorously tackled in lessons. The very good and thorough assessment and marking in English underpins good literacy development, giving pupils a clear understanding of their own strengths and of those areas in which they can improve. Some other curriculum areas are playing their part in the development of pupils' literacy. Notable examples are the considerable amount of extended writing encouraged in history and geography, the accuracy of reading considered essential and given much attention in modern foreign languages, and music where the skills of listening are a prime concern.

31. The teaching of basic skills is good in mathematics through the use of regular and appropriate oral work. Written skills develop from a low base in Year 7 to become in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 4. Scientific calculators are used well, for example in the teaching of functions in mathematics. In the development of three-dimensional drawing in design and technology, pupils with SEN gain insight in their work only to be somewhat frustrated by practical difficulties. In science and geography, pupils analyse data, use statistics and display graphs. In science and in design technology, pupils display skills in measuring, estimating and recording data. They devise formulae for use in spreadsheets in information technology (IT). In RE, data is interpreted using ICT in Year 7, where the results of a questionnaire on Christmas was interpreted and evaluated well.

32. There are improvements in many of the specific weaknesses in teaching and learning noted in the last inspection report. Opportunities for pupil involvement in evaluating and improving their own and others' performances in physical education (PE) are now provided in gymnastics. Learning materials have been redesigned in some subjects, notably history and some aspects of design and technology, so that they match better the range of pupils' abilities. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are now higher in Year 11 art lessons and most RE lessons, though not yet in resistant materials and ICT. Much more use of ICT is now made in history. The assessment of pupils' work is much improved in geography. Mathematics teaching is now more focused on pupils' needs. Nevertheless, a major weakness is the ineffective use of time in many of the lessons seen. It is not a universal problem, though examples were seen in English, mathematics, science, art, music and RE. Some teachers in some departments make very good use of every minute of available time. It was noticeable that unless the lesson was well planned to contain a range of different types of activity and the teacher made a conscious effort to keep up a fast pace for the whole 75 minutes, then usually one of two things happened. Either 60 minutes' worth of work was expanded to fit the 75-minute time slot, or the energies of both teacher and pupils were seen to flag in the latter third of the lesson.

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

33. The school has made improvements to its curriculum since the last inspection, particularly in art and music at Key Stage 3. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 now meets statutory requirements, except that some subjects still do not make enough use of ICT. For older pupils, two of the key issues from 1997 have not yet been satisfactorily addressed. Pupils do not receive their full entitlement to all five strands of ICT at Key Stage 4, and the provision of RE at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form still do not meet statutory requirements. The school has plans to improve the curriculum in respect of these and other weaknesses. It also recognises the need to introduce more vocational courses into the Key Stage 4 curriculum. It is clear also that the full 75 minutes are not always used to best effect in numerous lessons.

34. The Sixth Form curriculum has been broadened by the introduction of Advanced Supplementary (AS) courses into Year 12. The school offers a reasonably broad range of subjects according to availability and demand, but there are notable omissions such as design and technology, music, RE and French. A local college offers students access to its full range of GNVQ and other vocational courses, in partnership with the school, which provides the key skills and personal support. Numbers have varied from a high of 24 in previous years to the present low of four at present. A further six to fifteen students have followed a Royal Society of Arts (RSA) computer literacy course. A/AS Level consortium arrangements with local schools have fallen to very low numbers this year, and are due to be phased out at the end of the year. The disadvantages of having to match two school timetables together far outweighed the benefits of greater opportunities for such small student numbers. Student numbers in the Sixth Form have normally been very small, and this has inhibited both the range of subjects the school can offer and some of the desirable teaching styles designed to foster more independence which are only effective with reasonably sized groups. The new AS courses are remedying that situation in Year 12 by producing more groups of a viable size, but there is no guarantee that these larger numbers will carry on to study the same subjects at A Level in Year 13. Many are expected not to do so.

35. A whole-school initiative to improve literacy has been implemented, particularly in English and the humanities. The ICT programme at Key Stage 3 is delivered through separate subjects but with limited success, except in history and RE where some good use of data bases is taking place, and in English which is developing well the communication strand of ICT.

36. Regular curricular reviews have pinpointed areas for development, but shortages of funding or absence of key members of staff have delayed their implementation. Some of the plans for improvement depend upon better deployment of staff. At this point in time, for instance, two specialist teachers of RE spend a good deal of their time teaching geography and history because of a long standing shortage of a geography teacher. On the other hand, some non-specialists teach RE at a time when the statutory requirements in respect of RE are not being met. Factors outside the school's control have resulted in supply teachers covering lessons in modern foreign languages and mathematics during long term absences, and this has adversely affected the achievement of some pupils.

37. The school provides a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which covers such topics as health, sex education, the dangers of drug abuse, and the preparation of pupils for careers and adult life. The delivery of the programme by tutors in tutor groups is variable in quality, but in the best lessons there is a clear link between the objective of the lesson (for example, 'self awareness' in Year 9) and the later outcomes (option choices that best suit the individual). Pupils have equal access to the range of subjects on offer and are well counselled. However, when interviewed, some pupils did not fully understand the restrictions on option choices, particularly in respect of the possibility of doing two modern foreign languages. Some parents too expressed concern about their understanding of the rationale for some option choices at the end of Year 9.

38. The formal curriculum is enhanced by a good number of extra-curricular activities, with particular strengths in music and physical education. There are also lunch time and after-school clubs devoted to art and design, ICT, statistics, design and technology and modern foreign languages. A significant number of pupils take part and show enthusiasm and commitment for their chosen activity. The school has valuable links with institutions overseas, such as a German exchange. There are also productive links with partner primary schools and further education colleges, for courses, visits, social events and the induction of new pupils.

39. The provision for careers education and work experience is satisfactory. All Year 10 pupils undertake work experience during the summer term. The scheme is well organised by the experienced head of careers, and pupils are given good preparation by their form tutors, who also arrange 'follow up' activities to reinforce the value of the experience. Pupils are required to fill in evaluation cards and encouraged to write letters of thanks to their placement hosts. Special needs pupils are well supported by a range of programmes funded by the Training and Enterprise Council. Four pupils recently benefited from the 'Compact link' scheme designed to help those pupils lacking in confidence and social skills.

40. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive one careers lesson per month on a rotational basis taken from either mathematics or English. This is supplemented by work carried out during PSE lessons. Effective liaison has been established with the careers service, and careers officers visit the school twice weekly. The careers service quality assurance standard has been met. This includes a review of the careers library and resources. Funding for careers work is adequate, and has been supplemented by additional funding from the Training and Enterprise Council towards the cost of organising work experience. Year 11 pupils are given the opportunity to take part in practice job interviews, conducted by representatives of business, industry and the public services.

41. Pupils with SEN are fully involved in the activities of the school, and the success of their integration is initially due to the very good liaison with primary schools, which guarantees continuity between primary and secondary schools. As far as possible, pupils with SEN follow the same courses as mainstream pupils, and there is no loss of impetus when they leave the security of the SEN department. Arrangements for these pupils are good in Years 7 and 8, where they include withdrawal to the special needs department. From Year 9 onwards, provision is made by subject departments in co-operation with the special needs co-ordinator, but this is less secure overall than it is in Years 7 and 8, due to the difficulties of co-ordinating effectively across so many different areas.

42. There is an awareness of the importance of literacy development, and this is a clear priority of the school. However, there is no whole-school literacy policy to inform the work of departments. Some departments contribute more to literacy development than others. In humanities, there is a positive and specific approach across the subject areas, including a development plan for extended writing in history. In English, the communication strand of the ICT curriculum is very well integrated into the curriculum. The SEN department has a clear focus on the needs of particular pupils. However, the school lacks a co-ordinated approach to bring together the various departmental initiatives and to formally share good practice.

43. The school is currently developing a numeracy policy across the curriculum. The overall effectiveness of the current arrangements is satisfactory. At present, strategies are left to individual departments. In art, for example, pupils have opportunities to use a variety of materials, including clay, to make objects in a variety of scales in three dimensions. Linear perspective plays a central role in the work of the department. Examples of handling data arise in many ways, for instance entering mobile phone tariffs into spreadsheets in ICT. However, some subjects such as history do not have a policy of their own, and better co-ordination of numeracy provision across the school is needed to raise the impact on standards.

### **Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education**

44. The school continues to be highly committed to the all round education of its pupils. This is well embedded in its aims, values and key policy documents, although there is no specific and separate policy for personal development. However, the school has audited its provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the results confirm inspection evidence that this is a very positive area of school life.

45. The spiritual dimension has strengthened and is now satisfactory, with a number of good features. Across RE, English, science, history, music and art and design there are opportunities to reflect, to be inspired and to consider the universe and the purpose of life. The school community's ability to cope with a number of bereavements has demonstrated its spiritual reserves. There are a number of special occasions that enhance the school's spiritual life, such as the annual Carol Services and Remembrance Day assemblies with the observance of the traditional two minutes silence.

46. The school provides well for moral development. The code of conduct is clear, fair and well understood. There is strong provision for exploring ethical and environmental issues across the curriculum, especially in RE, PSE, science, history, geography and English. The good quality of relationships between teachers and pupils exemplify an ethical community, and the pupils appreciate the good example given by their teachers. "They go all out for you" said a group of senior pupils. Pupils are encouraged to be generous and caring through a strong charity programme linked to the locality and also international in scope.

47. The school has improved the opportunities for taking responsibility and for growth in social skills. This is a good aspect of educating for personal development. Many lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, and they generally do so productively. PE gives

significant opportunities in lessons and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities the department offers. Also many aspects of life relating to social development are taught in PSE and other subjects. For example, pupils learn about the family, parenting and citizenship. The school council is an important initiative, and it is already a mature body allowed to make real decisions. Pupils are now trusted to be in rooms at lunchtimes and most respond well. There are good opportunities for walks, and trips to the theatre and to restaurants, and there is a leavers' ball. A wide range of achievements both in and out of school is given recognition in order to encourage participation in worthwhile activities.

48. Cultural opportunities are satisfactory. The school is working hard to widen horizons and to introduce pupils to cultural diversity. There are important opportunities within lessons in art and design, design and technology, English, history, modern foreign languages, music and RE. In particular, there is good exposure to other cultures in, art and design, food technology, modern foreign languages, music, RE and textiles. Through the Comenius Project, the school has forged good links with Finland, Spain, Hungary and Germany. The links with Germany are especially strong, both in and out of lessons. School lunches have focus days on foods from other cultures, such as a Chinese or a Mexican day. There is a major annual concert in which many participate, and large contingents have contributed to the annual Civic Service in Sutton.

49. The resources for collective worship have been improved. There is a two-year daily cycle of good quality 'Thoughts for the Day'. Pupils listen and are then given a pause for prayer or reflection. This format meets the statutory requirement for collective worship, but many tutors do not follow this routine and so the breach of regulations continues. Most assemblies make brief opportunities for prayer or reflection. The twice-weekly assemblies are orderly occasions that reinforce the corporate identity of the school, as well as giving helpful spiritual and moral messages. Year 11 heard the story of a boy who chose to be a gardener. It gave them good food for thought on the relative importance of wealth, status and happiness in their career choices. On a number of occasions throughout the year, outside speakers are brought in to widen the scope of assemblies.

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

50. Care and welfare of its pupils is a strength of the school. It helps to create a safe and secure learning environment, and contributes considerably to pupils' self esteem and well being. Registration procedures have improved since the last inspection and now fully comply with statutory requirements.

51. The school has good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of its pupils. Their welfare and safety are supported by a system through which heads of year, class teachers and all staff know their pupils well. The heads of year are responsible to a deputy headteacher, and the organisation ensures that pupils are well looked after during their time at the school. The deputy headteacher is also responsible for child protection, and cases are sensitively handled through correct procedures. Health and safety is responsibly dealt with and governors are fully involved in this process. All statutory requirements are met. The pottery kiln has now been properly caged, a criticism in the last inspection report. Risk assessments are properly undertaken.

52. Good support is provided by outside agencies, and these include the school nurse, a counsellor, the educational psychologist and staff from a Pupil Referral Unit. A number of visiting specialists help with the delivery of the PSE programme, with drugs awareness and other aspects of health education.

53. The personal development of pupils is monitored effectively by class teachers, and records are held by heads of year. Arrangements for the educational support and guidance for pupils are good, and this is mainly due to the commitment of the teachers, who know the pupils well.

54. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The school has an appropriate system of monitoring through its heads of year. There is close liaison with the educational welfare officer, who visits regularly and attends case conferences. A deputy head, the careers adviser and local health professionals are involved in finding solutions for the non-attenders and pupils with school phobia who are on the school roll. The school is making good progress in this area.

55. The procedures for promoting and monitoring good behaviour are well established and comprehensive. They consist of a balanced combination of sanctions and rewards that help to create a positive atmosphere in the school. These are consistently implemented throughout the school, and are evident in the positive and open stance the school has taken against bullying. All pupils understand the forms that bullying can take and the way that the school deals with it. This open approach virtually ensures that bullying does not happen in the school. Both parents and pupils feel that bullying is dealt with well in the school.

56. Departments use the school's assessment policy well and assessment procedures are usually accurate. There is particularly good practice in English, where marking is very detailed, comments are purposeful and skills-based targets are set. In other subjects, the level descriptions of the National Curriculum are used to guide teachers' marking, and practice is consistent and encouraging. Pupils' involvement in their own assessment varies, and not all pupils know their National Curriculum levels and what they must do to improve.

57. The analysis of attainment data on pupils' achievements on entry to the school is still at an early stage. The school uses standardised Cognitive Ability Tests (CATS) in order to set its own base-lines against which to measure pupils' progress through the school, but this data is only available for the past three years. Each faculty completes its Teacher Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, and this is beginning to be used to set targets for pupils at Key Stage 4. There are plans to use software to help with this process in the future. The assessment gathering via Setting Targets and Monitoring Performance (STAMP) is well managed. This practice has yet to be extended to manage pupil underachievement, to increase motivation and raise standards across all key stages. Target setting is not yet consistent or precise enough, and not yet sufficiently related to improving pupils' attainment. Some staff have taken responsibility, as mentors, for monitoring the achievements of a limited number of underachieving pupils. This needs extending and sharpening.

58. The school carries out its duties appropriately in relation to annual reports to parents. These are distributed prior to Parents' Evenings. Attendance at these evenings is improving because of better follow-up procedures. Some parents would welcome further clarification of the technical

terms and educational jargon which hinder their understanding of, for example, National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Their concern is to understand how well their children are achieving compared to all children nationally. Some of the school's assessment systems make this difficult to determine, especially at Key Stage 3.

59. Statutory requirements are met for the day-to-day provision for pupils with SEN. Pupils are identified early and thoroughly assessed with the help of the appropriate authorities. Proper procedures are followed in order to gain the maximum support through the county system of allocating funds for special needs, and details of grant bids are well recorded. A proper register of pupils with SEN is kept. Assessment of their progress is on-going within the classroom, and these pupils are well aware of how well they are doing. Review of targets in their individual education plans is regular throughout the year. National Curriculum levels are assessed several times per half term for each subject while pupils are in the special needs department, and their progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science continues to be tracked at Key Stage 4.

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

60. The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. They are satisfied on the whole with the standards and achievements of the school. Parents are provided with information on a regular basis to keep them informed of events in the school and of their children's progress. Their involvement with the school and contribution towards their children's learning is satisfactory.

61. Parents' concerns are that they would like more homework for their children and to be kept more informed about how well they are doing at school. They feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents. On the other hand, they also say that their children make good progress at the school, that they are well taught and are expected to work hard. Parents support school events and concerts well, and most of them attend for parents meetings. The school has good arrangements with heads of years to contact parents in the event of difficulties or problems. This is particularly useful when pupils first start at the school, in case they have initial teething problems when settling in. At least one of the senior staff is always available for parents to contact in the event of any concerns. There is a well developed letter of praise system from the headteacher, which celebrates good work from pupils. Parents who have received one of these letters speak warmly of the system.

62. The school provides parents with a well-presented prospectus and an informative annual governor's report. Parents receive letters regularly to keep them informed of events in the school. Annual pupil reports are satisfactory, but some parents of younger pupils feel that they contain too much jargon which they find difficult to understand. Parents would like to know particularly how their children are getting on compared with other children nationally, and sometimes do not understand this from the information given to them. The reports provide them with comments on each subject, with some areas targeted for improvement. Class tutors and heads of years add comments, and there is a separate sheet available for parents to respond. National results are sent out annually with the school's results, but internally, the school uses a different form of grading, especially in RE. Some parents find this confusing.

63. The school has no Parent Teacher Association but instead organises social and fund-raising events itself. These are quite well supported and the school concerts are very well supported. Parents find the communication through the homework diaries to be useful but their comments are not always answered.

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

64. The school's leadership and management is satisfactory overall but with significant areas for improvement. The headteacher manages the school well in a calm, gently assertive and systematic way. He is well supported by a capable senior management team, who carry out their defined tasks efficiently. Their deployment is not as effective as it could be in terms of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards of attainment across the school. There is a deputy headteacher responsible for pastoral and another for academic matters. This means that heads of year and heads of faculty and their assistants have to refer to either one or the other of the deputy heads, and this is no longer fully effective. Members of the management team do not walk the school visiting classrooms and practical areas often enough to establish, amongst other things, how widespread is the issue of classes 'running out of steam' towards the ends of the long lessons. They are not allocated a small number of subject areas and year groups each, in order to act as mentors and critical friends to those groups of staff and pupils. They are not, therefore, as well placed to head off potential weakness and share good practice as they should be so as to raise standards of teaching to the level of the best practice in the school. They are attached to a particular year group, but only to act as points of contact when staff are completing pupils' annual reports.

65. The governing body supports the school well through its regular meetings and the work of its committees, but is less actively involved in other aspects of the work of the school than many governors elsewhere. Governors fulfil their statutory duties satisfactorily, except for assuring that all pupils receive their full entitlement to ICT at Key Stage 4, and their RE entitlement at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Acts of collective worship do not take place for all pupils every day.

66. School improvement planning lacks rigour and bite. The school's plans are strong on hope, written to a common format and well colour co-ordinated, but weak on exactly what needs to be done, by whom, by when and on how success is to be measured. There is a culture in the school that either nothing can be done in some areas for development without the necessary funding or that the answer to most problems is to conduct a review. At least eight years ago, critical friends of the school argued that a timetable structure with effectively four long lessons of 75 minutes each day was wasteful of teaching and learning time. The school's way of tackling this issue was to carry out 'research' in a few schools with alternative lesson lengths and then to debate the matter in a way that concentrated on the reasons for not changing. The negative arguments were duly accepted, despite a significant number of departments arguing for the reverse, and the flexibility of timetabling it could provide. Meanwhile, years later, time in lessons is still not being used effectively, and not enough is being done to counteract this. The same failure to take decisive action explains the lack of progress in other objectives noted in the development plan. The school's management structure has not been improved, vocational education has not been expanded at Key Stage 4,

or RE introduced in the Sixth Form. The new three-year plan (for 2001 to 2004), is presently in its initial stages of development, but is in danger of being just as unhelpful. It begins with the aim of 'increasing levels of pupil responsibility' and ends with 'preparing for the next inspection'. It is full of 'to respond to', 'to develop', 'to review', 'to continue to' and 'to focus on' statements.

67. Pastoral leadership is strong at Quarrydale School. Led well by experienced heads of year, the year system is the backbone of the school's system of pastoral care and it works well. The leadership of almost all subject areas is at least satisfactory, and in some cases it is good and very good. New leadership since the last inspection has energised some departments. Other more long serving heads of department have taken appropriate steps to improve the areas for development listed in the last report. Good examples are the much improved use of ICT in the teaching of history, and pupils' increased knowledge of the work of famous artists in art and design. Formal monitoring and evaluating of the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards overall is developing well in, for example, English, mathematics and history. However, monitoring lacks focus in some other departments, including science, ICT, art and design, geography and RE. A more effective whole school strategy to improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation is urgently needed.

68. Specific grant is used effectively for its designated purposes. All the legal requirements for the provision for pupils with SEN are met. The governor who takes responsibility for the oversight of this area has the additional advantage of considerable personal expertise within the field. The SEN department contains much expertise and enthusiasm amongst its teaching staff and learning support assistants, and is appropriately led by the SEN co-ordinator. There are areas requiring further development. Some issues mentioned in the last report still await action. Then, as now, there is concern about the use of pupils' IEPs outside the SEN department. Some do not contain subject specific targets, and some are not used in planning lessons appropriately. Gifted and talented pupils are not yet identified and monitored. Standards of departmental provision of suitably adapted work for pupils of varying abilities are not evaluated systematically. Reading ages of pupils are not passed on to departments as a matter of routine. IEPs are not monitored except on a random basis by the special needs co-ordinator.

69. The number of staff, including support staff, is adequate for the needs of the curriculum in most subject areas. Most staff are well qualified and experienced for the subjects that they teach. Staffing in art has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, there are significant issues over difficulties created by the long-term absence of some staff and difficulties over recruitment of suitable supply teachers, which are having an adverse impact on standards. The geography department is short of one full-time teacher, resulting in the use of some non-specialist teachers whose knowledge and experience do not match all the needs of the geography curriculum. There are long-term absences in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. In mathematics, there is extensive use of supply teachers, and frequent changes of teacher are resulting in pupils suffering from a lack of continuity in their education. Staffing is inadequate in the RE department because teachers qualified in RE are teaching other subjects.

70. Procedures for the induction and professional development of staff are good, and all aspects of staff development are well documented. Before the recent introduction of performance management, the school already had sound appraisal procedures in place and was into the third

cycle of its scheme. Arrangements for performance management are already well in hand, and the scheme has been launched using two staff training days. A good structure exists for its delivery through curriculum line managers. The school has similarly thorough procedures for determining priorities for professional development within subject areas. Teachers are required to submit applications for training needs that are related to faculty development plans together with outline costs. Senior management then considers requests against criteria dictated by the school improvement plan. This process is currently being integrated into the new performance management scheme. Newly qualified teachers, and all staff new to the school, are provided with a well-documented induction programme supervised overall by an assistant head. Subject training and induction is provided by the appropriate faculties. There is also a whole-school element to the programme, which involves a weekly meeting and a schedule of lesson observations, assessment and feedback which involves the headteacher and local authority link adviser, as well as assistant head and faculty members. A similarly thorough programme is provided for student teachers. Those student teachers in the school during the inspection are impressed by the thoroughness of the provision made for them and the welcome given to them by the school.

71. The amount of money set aside for learning resources has been increased to six per cent of the total school budget this year. As at the time of the previous inspection, there are deficiencies in the provision of resources for learning in art and music. The shortage of percussion instruments, and IT and music technology still has a detrimental effect on the work of the music department. Two of the computer suites are well equipped, but pupils following specialist courses in IT are limited by insufficient computers for all groups. There are not enough computers, hardware for generating digital imagery, printers and other peripherals in other subjects to allow good use of ICT across the whole school curriculum. Good use is made of CD-ROMs in geography. ICT resources in history and English are good, well used, and much improved since the last inspection.

72. The library is benefiting from the appointment of a new librarian who, as well as making a regular weekly contribution to the PSE course, has recruited a number of pupils and is training them to assist in managing the library. The book stock is adequate for the majority of subjects with the exception of design technology, whose books are limited and outdated, and art, especially for younger pupils. Good use is made of the library by the art, English, geography, history and science departments. Pupils from Years 7 and 8 make good use of the fiction shelves by regularly borrowing books.

73. The school structure is sound. On the whole the ageing building is appropriate for its function. General classroom provision for the majority of curriculum areas is good, with spacious classrooms. The school grounds provide an extensive area for sporting activities. Work to resolve the acoustics problem in the music rooms, reported in the last inspection, is scheduled to begin in June 2001. Many of the teaching areas have been refurbished, and there is an on-going programme of redecoration. Some of the furniture and fittings in the science rooms are affecting the scope of possible practical work, and need replacement. Good departmental organisation and communication are inhibited by the split location of the mathematics rooms. The layout in one modern languages room is not conducive to the promotion of pupil progress because storage reduces the size of the room. Good displays

embellish many teaching areas, although many corridor areas with the potential to enhance the quality of the environment by mounting suitable displays remain unexploited. The accommodation is in the main clean and well cared for, although litter around the school is an on-going problem, a pointer to the need for improved education on environmental issues.

74. Routine financial management is very efficient. There is an appropriate division of responsibility and secure procedures for the ordering, receiving and payment for goods and services purchased by the school. Regular information is provided for the head teacher, governors and cost centres, allowing expenditure to be monitored and budgets prepared. The finance manager also does an excellent job of administering the Special Educational Needs Funds on behalf of the local family of schools. The last audit was conducted in November 1998. It was a very good audit and all its minor recommendations have been implemented. Best value principles are used as appropriate for the ordering of goods or services and to determine how well the school is performing against similar schools nationally, but not in evaluating the best use of teaching and learning time or the deployment of key staff. The school does not operate a deficit budget, but relies on savings within the financial year to enable it to fund learning resources for the next year. Good use is made of information and communication technology in the administration and financial control of funds.

75. On the other hand, strategic financial planning is weak. There is too much concentration upon: this is how much money is available, therefore this is all we can do for the moment. There is too little on: this is what we need to do, therefore how can we either bring to bear our present resources or increase our resources in order to bring this about? There are plans on paper for solving many of the school's ongoing problems, but their time scale is too elastic, the will to solve them, at times, too weak.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. The school's staff and governors should continue to focus on continually improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to maintain and to raise standards, and in particular they should:

- Improve, as a matter of priority, overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9:  
(*Paragraphs: 2, 6, 7, 57*)
  - \* particularly in literacy and numeracy, concentrating, not exclusively, but especially on the underachievement of boys;
  - \* including, by strengthening the pupil mentoring system at Key Stage 3 to support and monitor individual underachievers with a view to eliminating this underachievement.
- Improve attainment in ICT, resistant materials and French, by:  
(*Paragraphs: 9, 10, 131, 136, 154, 159, 162*)
  - \* improving the teaching, learning and co-ordination in these areas;
  - \* taking steps to improve the relative unpopularity of French compared to German.
- Take steps to prevent, where possible, intermittent and long term staff absences from hindering pupils' achievements.  
(*Paragraphs: 3, 69*)
- Fulfil statutory requirements by ensuring that pupils:  
(*Paragraphs: 33, 36, 154, 190, 191*)
  - \* receive their full ICT entitlement at Key Stage 4;
  - \* receive the RE entitlement set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus;
  - \* are able to study RE in the Sixth Form.
- Sharpen whole-school strategic planning by:  
(*Paragraphs: 66, 74, 75*)
  - \* concentrating upon fewer and more achievable targets;
  - \* prioritising these and looking for more imaginative and creative ways of achieving them;
  - \* having more specific time scales, more definite accountability and more rigorous success criteria.

- Deploy senior managers in a more effective way, in order to raise standards across the school, by:  
(*Paragraphs: 64*)
  - \* linking them to individual departments as ‘critical friends’;
  - \* attaching them to particular year groups;
  - \* making them more accountable, in partnership with individual heads of department and heads of year, for the success of those areas;
  - \* having a more pro-active approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the day to day work of the school.
  
- Improve the cost effectiveness of the Sixth Form, by:  
(*Paragraphs: 78 to 84*)
  - \* broadening the range, type and suitability of courses available for students;
  - \* increasing the numbers of students who stay on into the Sixth Form;
  - \* improving the attainment of students by the end of Year 13.
  
- Use all available teaching and learning time more effectively, either by:  
(*Paragraphs: 28, 32*)
  - \* ensuring the more productive use of every moment of the present very long lessons;
  - \* or by having more and shorter lessons each day.

77. Other issues the governors will wish to take note of:

- Ensure that communications with parents, especially reports on their children’s progress, are clearly written without use of technical terms and that they identify how their children are performing compared with standards nationally;  
(*Paragraph: 62*)
  
- Not all pupils presently experience an act of collective worship on every day of the week.  
(*Paragraph: 49*)

## **OTHER FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL**

### **SIXTH FORM PROVISION**

78. The local area around the school does not have a strong tradition of sixth-form study. Numbers recruited to the school Sixth Form vary between 75 and 95 in total. The present numbers on roll are 44 in Year 12 and 34 in Year 13, a total of 78. The school offers a restricted range of subjects according to availability and demand. There are notable omissions, such as design and technology, French, music, RE. At present, Post-16 students have no access to RE. A pilot scheme to introduce Key Skills through RE has been unavoidably postponed, owing to the long-term absence of a key member of staff.

79. From September 2000, all GCE courses in Year 12 are at AS Level, with the choice of converting to A Level in Year 13. A local college offers students access to its full range of GNVQ and other vocational courses, in partnership with the school, which provides the Key Skills and personal support. Numbers on these GNVQ options have varied between 24 in previous years to as low as four at present. A further six to fifteen students have followed an RSA computer literacy course. A/AS Level consortium arrangements with a local school, reduced to very low numbers this year, are due to be phased out at the end of the year. The disadvantages of having to match two whole school timetables together far outweighed the benefits of greater opportunities for the few students who benefit from the arrangement. Student numbers in the Sixth Form have normally been very small, and this has inhibited both the range of subjects the school can offer and some of the desirable teaching styles designed to foster more independence which are only effective with reasonably sized groups. The new AS courses are remedying that situation in Year 12 by producing more groups of a viable size, but there is no guarantee that these larger numbers will carry on to study the same subjects at A Level in Year 13. Many are expected not to do so.

80. Procedures for recruitment into the Sixth Form are thorough. The initial guidance delivered via careers and PSE is followed through by close consultation with heads of faculty and co-ordinators. An induction day after the GCSE examinations and enrolment after the results are known complete the arrangements.

81. There is a comprehensive system of monitoring student progress, aimed at raising standards of attainment at Post 16. Interim reporting, termly reviews and three formal reports in the style of records of achievement enable students, parents and tutors to take swift action should any concerns arise. Personal and social education offers study skills, completing target sheets for each subject, and mentoring by senior members of staff, especially in target-setting and planning for higher education. Careers officers visit the Sixth Form regularly with displays, and advise students through PSE. The trip to the national careers convention in Birmingham is a regular feature.

82. The quality of teaching and learning in the Sixth Form is good, but results have been low in recent years. At A Level, the average points score of 10.8 points was well below the national average of 18.2 points. This was similar to the results of 1999, though better than results in 1998. As elsewhere in the school, girls outperformed boys significantly in 2000, though relative performances had been closer in 1999. By the end of the Sixth Form, students generally but not always achieve at least satisfactorily compared to their prior achievement in all subjects studied.

They achieved better than expected in mathematics in 2000.

83. Although Sixth Form students have no prefectorial responsibility, they are actively involved in the life of the main school. Apart from their contact through year representatives' meetings and the school council, they help to run the library and sports teams. They also provide learning support for mathematics, graphics, ICT and reading in English. They are active in organising events for themselves and other year groups, and regularly run fund-raising activities for the Sixth Form centre, for national charities, and initiatives such as Comic Relief. Some students are active in the community, being placed in primary schools or in nursing homes.

84. The headteacher, staff and governors are aware that in purely financial terms, the present approach to Sixth Form provision is not cost-effective. For example, it costs £300 pounds more per year to educate each of the 34 students in Year 13 than the school receives for those students. The knock on effect of this is some larger classes elsewhere in the school. On the other hand, the school argues that the Year 13 students concerned are less likely to remain in full time education elsewhere, and the evidence of their reluctance to go to the other colleges for link courses bears this out to some extent. Also, it is argued, the school benefits in all kinds of non-financial ways from the presence of its Sixth Form students.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	156
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	12	52	32	3	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll	997	78
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	156	N/A

<b>Special educational needs</b>	<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils with statements of SEN	34	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's SEN register	168	N/A

<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	5.9

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	0.4

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	98	101

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	45	51	50
	Girls	74	58	51
	Total	119	109	101
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	48 (57)	55 (55)	51 (44)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	16 (24)	25 (25)	18 (14)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	45	49	47
	Girls	74	62	58
	Total	119	111	105
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	60 (70)	56 (61)	53 (43)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	28 (39)	23 (26)	17 (21)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	93	81

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	31	78	85
	Girls	40	76	79
	Total	71	154	164

Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (32)	89 (84)	94 (91)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

<b>GCSE results</b>		<b>GCSE point score</b>
Average point score per pupil	School	33
	National	38.4

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	N/A
	National	N/A

*Attainment at the end of the Sixth Form*

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A Level or AS Level examinations.	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	15	13	28

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
<b>School</b>	8.0	13.5	10.8	3.0	N/A	3.0
<b>National</b>	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

<b>Vocational qualifications</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% success rate</b>
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	<b>School</b>	0
	<b>National</b>	76.5

*Ethnic background of pupils*

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	8
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	992
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*Exclusions in the last school year*

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
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	52	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff:**

##### **Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	356

#### **Deployment of teachers:**

##### **Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.7
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size:**

##### **Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	23.8
Key Stage 4	24.4

### *Financial information*

Financial year	<b>1999 -2000</b>
----------------	-------------------

	£
Total income	2333606.00
Total expenditure	2335562.00
Expenditure per pupil	2349.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	58545.00
Balance carried forward to next year	36589.00

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	997
Number of questionnaires returned	221

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	30	57	8	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	32	60	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	51	13	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	51	18	5	2
The teaching is good.	24	65	4	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	50	22	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	48	5	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	44	3	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	17	54	20	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	20	57	9	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	57	8	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	43	16	4	14

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

### **ENGLISH**

86. Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment in English. Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 3 but improve by the end of Key Stage 4. This improvement is sustained in the Sixth Form.

87. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests in English at the end of Year 9 show the pupils to be well below the national average. Both boys and girls achieve less well than boys and girls do nationally. The results in mathematics and science are better than those in English. The school asked for its English test papers to be remarked in 2000. As a result, 28 pupils had their marks raised and the numbers of pupils achieving Level 5, the nationally expected level, increased. However, this increase was not enough to raise overall attainment to that achieved nationally.

88. By the end of Key Stage 4, the 2000 GCSE results in English Language are average at grades A\* to C and at grades A\* to G. Boys' results are below the national average for boys, though girls' results are just above the national average for girls. These results are a significant improvement on the GCSE results for 1999, which were well below national averages. They show the steady improvement that pupils make in English as they progress through the school. The 2000 results in GCSE English Literature are below average at grades A\* to C but close to national averages at grades A\* to G. Boys and girls do less well than boys and girls do nationally. The English department has analysed these results carefully and identified areas for improvement.

89. The results at GCE A Level English are average. All students achieved at least grade E, and a third achieved the higher grades A or B. These results are an improvement on those for 1999, and reflect the improving trend of the last three years.

90. Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 3, in Year 9, is below average. Data the school has shows that standards in English are well below average on entry to the school. This is confirmed in the work seen and lessons observed. A Year 7 class, taught as a mixed ability group, enjoyed a well-planned lesson aimed at improving their writing skills. In Year 8, the volume and quality of pupils' written work improves. Library lessons in Years 7 and 8 encourage pupils to read and to write about their reading. In the present Year 9, higher attaining pupils are achieving standards that are above average. For example, pupils understand the particular demands of travel writing as literary non-fiction. They can identify the effect on the reader of a particular skill in writing, such as the use of alliteration for rhythm or emphasis. Generally, pupils speak clearly and read competently, although a little hesitantly at times. Pupils listen carefully in class. Some pupils of average attainment are working close to national average standards, while others are still below average. Pupils of lower attainment can produce well-structured work. Pupils with SEN are well integrated into English classes. They make good progress in the subject because the teaching develops

pupils' literacy skills. The previous inspection noted weaknesses in spelling and structure in written English. These are still evident, even to some extent in higher attaining pupils, but the department is strenuously tackling them. Pupils draft and redraft their written work, which helps them to improve. Overall, the standards of work seen are better than the test results at Key Stage 3 suggest, but they are still below the expected levels for this age group.

91. Attainment by pupils near the end of Key Stage 4 is close to average. The skills of speaking and listening continue to improve. The skills of drafting and redrafting continue to be used well. There are strengths in personal and imaginative writing, which reflect the teaching of key skills and the use of appropriate vocabulary. Pupils report that there are opportunities to develop independent learning in English. Some weaknesses in spelling and structure remain, where pupils sometimes find it difficult to use language to express their views. This is to be seen in the work of some Year 11 pupils writing about a literary text in a timed exercise. Higher attaining pupils in the two top sets in Year 10 are working at above average levels. In an outstanding lesson on poetry, pupils enjoyed engaging with the poems through a variety of approaches. They show a detailed knowledge of how poetry works and the importance of imagery and structure in revealing a poet's intention. About sixty pupils are in the present top sets in Year 10, working at standards that are above the national average. This suggests that the judgements reflected in the teacher assessments in the 2000 National Curriculum tests, which these pupils did at the end of Year 9, are accurate.

92. The picture of attainment in English in this school, therefore, is one of steady improvement from a low level of attainment on entry to average attainment at age 16, which is continued in the Sixth Form. In English and other subjects, notably humanities, good teaching promotes literacy development. Pupils speak clearly and with confidence. In art and music, for example, pupils use the subject language correctly. They ask questions and give answers confidently, though in some subjects, such as geography, these answers tend to be short. Pupils read well enough to help their learning in all subjects. Pupils' writing skills are developed in English, to the benefit of other subjects. Listening skills are good in English, modern foreign languages and music, but weaker in some subjects where a combination of low attainment and the long double period means that pupils' attention span is too short to cope. Pupils with SEN make good progress in all aspects of English and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress.

93. The teaching in English is good. More than nine lessons in ten of all lessons observed are satisfactory or better. Nearly six in ten are good or better. This includes examples of very good and outstanding lessons. The teachers are dedicated and hardworking. Their consistent approach to the curriculum and shared high expectations is a strength. Lessons are well planned and teaching is explicit. The consistent approach to developing language skills benefits all pupils by promoting accuracy of expression and extended writing. A variety of teaching and learning styles is used which involves the pupils in learning. In the lessons judged very good or outstanding, it was the crisp organisation, the lively and productive pace and the quality of engagement between teacher and pupils that were the effective features. English teachers are good models of spoken and written language. Where a lesson is unsatisfactory, it is associated with unsatisfactory pupil attitudes, which affect the rate of learning for the rest of the class. The marking of pupils' work is detailed, supportive and

helpful. Pupils are given clear advice on improvement. The drafting and redrafting of work is a strength of the department. It enables pupils of all levels of attainment to write at length and to improve what they write. Pupils with SEN learn effectively due to help from classroom support assistants where this is provided, or due to teacher support and the use of appropriate material.

94. Mainly as a consequence of this good teaching, standards of behaviour are generally good. Pupils listen well in class. They enjoy working in pairs or groups and support each other's learning. They show an awareness of the importance of their written work, and have a clear understanding of the progress they make in English. Their evaluations at the end of a unit of work show they pay close attention to the individual targets that teachers set for them. In class, pupils show competence in literary skills. They ask questions and speak clearly and confidently. In a Year 8 class, the behaviour of some lower attaining boys was unsatisfactory and prevented the class making sufficient progress. The large size of the class and the excessive length of the double period were contributory factors.

95. The department is very well led and managed, which contributes directly to the improving standards in the subject. Effective monitoring of standards in the department is carried out. The English staff work as a cohesive and enthusiastic team. The department's assessment scheme is very good. There is a common approach in all years, which involves a detailed but supportive assessment of each unit of work. It is used consistently by all staff and helps pupils to know where they are in the subject. Individual and specific targets for improvement accompany this, so those pupils know how they can improve. Provision for pupils with SEN is good.

96. The scheme of work is good but still developmental. It is detailed and comprehensive and addresses the English National Curriculum Attainment Targets in detail. The staff use it consistently and conscientiously. Information and communication technology (ICT) is very well integrated into the curriculum. Regular use is made of the school computers, and specific lessons are taught in the computer rooms. Work produced is graded for both English and ICT skills. Accommodation is adequate, although in need of some refurbishment. The library is well used for reading lessons but the stock needs upgrading.

97. The department has improved since the previous inspection. The new head of department has encouraged the department to flourish and build on its strengths. Attainment is improving by the end of Key Stage 4. The challenge for the department is to sustain these improvements and to develop more strategies to raise the achievement of boys, especially those in the average and lower attaining groups.

## **DRAMA**

98. At Key Stage 3, drama is provided for Years 7 and 8 but not for Year 9. At Key Stage 4, drama is now an established subject. Two experienced and qualified teachers, who share the job between them, teach drama. One of these teachers, whose timetable covers the first three days of the week, was absent through illness during the inspection. The only opportunity to observe Key Stage 4 drama occurred on the last day of the inspection.

99. The 2000 GCSE results in drama are well above national averages with 68 per cent of pupils achieving grades A\* to C. These results are a significant improvement on the GCSE results for 1998 and 1999. As a subject, drama attracts more girls than boys and girls tend to gain more grades A\* to C than boys do.

100. Pupils know about the techniques of drama and can use them effectively. For example, Year 10 pupils used forum theatre very well to create a moment of drama around a theme they were working on. This encouraged pupils to take part in the decision making process involved in character development. Some pupils made quite astute criticisms, which helped develop characterisation and moved the drama on.

101. Teaching in drama is good. Lessons are well planned and take into account what pupils know and are able to do. There is a clear focus to the lesson. This, together with purposeful direction by the teacher, brings out the best in the pupils, who are actively and enjoyably involved for the whole lesson and contributes to the above average learning.

102. There is good liaison between the teachers who share responsibility for drama. The subject documentation is thorough and well organised. Pupils enjoy the subject, work hard and achieve good standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

103. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 are below the national average, with fewer than average achieving the expected National Curriculum level (Level 5) or above. Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average and close to being well below, with ten per cent more pupils still at National Curriculum Level 3 than seen nationally. Achievement through the key stage is satisfactory. Boys perform less well than girls.

104. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, GCSE results were in line with the national average in the range of grades A\* to C. Progress through the key stage is satisfactory as the standard of these pupils was also in line with the national average when they were at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1998. Girls' achievement is good, with attainment above the national average for girls. Boys' attainment is below the national average for boys, and also below the national average for the number of boys with grades A\* to G. Attendance is one factor in this underachievement. Standards of numeracy reach satisfactory levels by the end of the key stage. The provision for pupils with SEN is good. Their achievement is good through both key stages even though their standard of numeracy at the end of the key stage is below expectations. A certificate of achievement course is available for the very few pupils who are not entered for GCSE.

105. Standards of attainment at the end of the Sixth Form have varied in the last three years. Some pupils begin their course with a prior attainment of GCSE grade C, which is a low starting point for a GCE A Level course. In 1999, attainment at GCE A Level was in line with the national average for students at the higher A/B grades, and for the number achieving a pass grade. Two students earned the higher grades in further mathematics. Achievement in the Sixth Form is good, though results in 2000 were well below the national average as a result of students starting their course with low prior

attainment.

106. Observed work and lessons in school do not mirror standards seen in 2000 as the profile of pupils on entry varies year on year, as does the number of pupils. Standards in Year 9 are still below national expectations but an improvement on standards in 2000. High attaining pupils have a sound basis in their knowledge of algebra, which is being extended well in lessons. Average attainers have yet to acquire the same sound basis, for example in the removal of brackets, but their work shows that goal is not far off. Low attainers can count down in twos and fives below zero, though they have more difficulty in placing numbers correctly on a linear scale.

107. The range of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is wide. High attaining pupils can express  $0.272727\dots$  as an exact fraction. Their work on vectors shows that very good basic skills have been developed in trigonometry and that some learning is at the highest Level. They also study GCSE statistics outside normal curriculum time. Average attaining pupils solve linear equations neatly and accurately. Work on the solution of simultaneous equations is not yet secure. Low attainers can draw three figure bearings accurately, and use a simple scale well on maps. Their standards of numeracy are not yet secure as they have difficulty with basic computations such as the calculation of 10 per cent of nine pounds.

108. In the Sixth Form group, numbers studying GCE A and AS Levels are well up on the last two years. In Year 13, the standard of attainment is above the national average. Students know the formula for calculating the angle between two vectors, and cope well with the challenge of understanding the general formula for the equation of a plane in three dimensions. Three students are studying further mathematics and have a good understanding of networks. In Year 12, students have yet to acquire the formal definition of the process of differentiation. They have a satisfactory understanding of velocity-time graphs, knowing that the area under the curve represents distance, for example, and how to calculate it.

109. Teaching is good overall and good at each key stage. Nearly two thirds of the teaching is good or better, and approximately one third of the teaching is satisfactory. There is a small minority of unsatisfactory teaching. The very good teaching seen is characterised by very good challenges from the outset, as in a Year 11 lesson where higher tier pupils consolidated basic skills well in a topic on square roots. Very good subject knowledge shown by the teacher impacted very well on pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy the humour in the teaching and some obtain real insight into the nature of their study. Regular and appropriate oral work through direct questions and good teaching of basic skills are the main reasons that numeracy levels reach national expectations by the end of the Key Stage 4 for the majority of pupils. The strength of the Sixth Form teaching lies in the very good subject knowledge seen in the teaching and the good challenges presented to students in their learning. Planning of lessons is good and work is thoroughly marked. The consequences of this good teaching are that behaviour in lessons is good overall and at times very good. Relationships generally are very good, and pupils listen well to the teachers and to each other. Pupils respond well to the teaching, and many are keen learners. Individual study habits are well developed in the Sixth Form and students work hard.

110. Areas for improvement in the teaching lie in the establishment of greater involvement of students in their learning, through discussion, oral response and the use of open-ended questions.

Discussion of alternative solutions to problems in geometry and discussion of different methods of subtraction are two examples of missed opportunities in the lessons seen. The main weakness in the teaching lies in the arrangements to cover for absent staff. Appropriately qualified, competent replacements are very difficult to find so the departmental staff are stretched to capacity.

Weaknesses stem from this, in the shared teaching arrangements for example, which adversely affect standards. Pupils with SEN learn effectively due to help from classroom support assistants where this is provided, or due to teacher support and the use of appropriate material. There are elements of silliness in the behaviour of some younger pupils and a very small minority of boys in Year 11 who are inclined to be disruptive. In those lessons where the teaching is judged satisfactory rather than good, concentration of pupils towards the end of the long lessons falls away and the rate of learning is reduced. The concentration of Sixth Form students is also reduced by the end of a whole afternoon of mathematics.

111. Leadership and management of the faculty are very good. Very good working relationships are established with senior management and within the faculty itself. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is good. Leadership ensures very good and clear direction for the subject. Many initiatives are in place and, following recent trials, the faculty is poised to introduce modular GCSE. A numeracy policy is in hand. Assessment through pupils' records of achievement folders is at a good standard of development. Timetable improvements are expected next year. Whole year setting arrangements remain as a further goal, as does further planning for the incorporation of more computer technology in the teaching of mathematics.

112. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. The teaching is now more focused on pupils' needs. Target setting is good. Self-assessment is in place. Progress has improved in the Sixth Form. Pupils' attitudes have improved. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has improved.

## **SCIENCE**

113. By the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils in science is below national expectations. In the 2000 national tests, the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 5 was below the national average, and well below for those reaching at least Level 6. Boys consistently achieve lower standards than girls, which is the opposite of the national picture at this key stage. Standards in science fell at a rate faster than the national trend in the three years to 1999, but there was a significant improvement in the results in the 2000 tests. As the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below the national average, results show that all pupils, including those with SEN, make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3.

114. Results in the examinations for the General Certificate of Secondary Education for the Year 2000 show that attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national average as measured by the proportion of pupils reaching grades A\* to C. The percentage of pupils achieving at grades A\* to G is close to the national average. Girls outperform boys by a greater margin than at Key Stage 3 and achieve results that are just below the national average for girls, whereas boys are significantly below the average for boys. GCSE results in 2000 were slightly better than in 1999 and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Comparison of standards reached by the end of Key

Stage 4 with attainment of the same pupils at Key Stage 3 shows that all pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4.

115. Standards seen during lessons and in the examination of pupils' work reflect test and examination results. Although standards overall are below average, there is a wide range of attainment across all four attainment targets through Key Stages 3 and 4, with some pupils working well above and others well below national expectations. By the end of Year 9, all pupils can carry out experiments confidently. Higher attaining pupils successfully plan their own experiments unaided and make predictions based on their own good conceptual understanding in biology, chemistry and physics. They draw conclusions from their experiments consistent with the data they have gathered. The work of lower attaining pupils is characterised by a much weaker grasp of concepts and scientific vocabulary, and they need constant support and reinforcement to proceed with their learning. By the end of Year 11, the highest attaining pupils are working well above national expectations and show good understanding, for example, of the concept of a 'mole' of substance. They carry out quantitative experiments to support their understanding. Pupils with low prior attainment in Year 11 are hampered by low levels of literacy and need constant support in their practical work. Pupils working on the concept of pressure can substitute numbers into a given equation to calculate pressure but few can link the equation to actual situations and examples.

116. Attainment in the Sixth Form at A Level over the last three years in biology, chemistry and physics is below average overall. However, grades achieved in physics are closer to the national average than in the other two subjects, and grades achieved in chemistry are significantly higher than those in biology. With very small numbers, it is not possible to identify a pattern in progress over time, but students make good progress in lessons seen during the inspection in all three subjects.

117. Just over half of the teaching seen is good or very good, and only one lesson was judged unsatisfactory. One lesson in seven is very good. Most of the good and all the very good teaching is at Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form. Teachers are well qualified and most lesson planning is good. They manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour. Amongst a variety of teaching and learning styles, question and answer techniques are used effectively at all key stages to establish baseline knowledge and develop understanding of key scientific concepts. Lessons are generally purposeful, with a range of activities often including good opportunities for experimental work. In some lessons, the pace was not maintained throughout, which is one factor contributing to the inattention of some pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly and many teachers give good guidance on how pupils can improve. In some cases, the failure of pupils to complete work or do homework was commented on but not followed up. Learning of basic skills, knowledge and understanding is seldom less than satisfactory, and good at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. Pupils with SEN learn effectively due to help from classroom support assistants where this is provided, or due to teacher support and the use of appropriate material.

118. In the best lessons, teachers' very high expectations, their secure subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject continuously engage pupils' attention throughout lessons, with consequent rapid learning. As a consequence, the majority of pupils have a positive attitude to work in science, and the good relationships they have with their teachers are a strong feature of almost all lessons. They co-operate well with each other when working together in, for example, experimental science which they enjoy, and show good attention to their own safety and that of others. The large majority

of pupils behave well and take an active part in, for example, question and answer sessions. In a Sixth Form chemistry lesson, students made significant gains in their understanding of the use of catalysts as a result of a carefully structured lesson that took them from practical to underlying theory. Pupils also learn effectively when teachers show a good understanding of the difficulties pupils have in grasping scientific ideas. A group of Year 10 pupils, many of them with SEN, showed achievement above expectations in their understanding of the eye. This was in a lesson in which a combination of carefully focussed questions and appropriate support material led them along in small steps, progressively building confidence and leading to effective learning. The learning of Year 12 biology students benefited from very clear emphasis on the use of appropriate terminology and good guidance for an individual practical on the structure of the heart.

119. Lessons, which were otherwise satisfactory in many respects, had some shortcomings that resulted in pupils learning more slowly than otherwise might have been expected. Most of these related to the teaching and learning styles used in some lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4. For example, pupils spending substantial time copying notes from the board or from books represents low expectations on the part of the teacher. In a few lessons, pupils were insufficiently engaged by the demonstrations they were watching, and some lessons had run out of steam within 10 minutes of the end of a double period. There are substantial breaks in continuity in the learning of pupils who fail to complete work or do homework, with the inevitable consequence of less effective achievement over time. A minority of pupils, mainly boys, show poor attitudes to work and there are a number of instances of work left incomplete, homework not done and some inattention towards the ends of lessons. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning are limited, but some very good examples were seen of pupils planning their own scientific investigations, particularly near the end of Key Stage 4.

120. Leadership and management of the department is satisfactory overall. Management of assessment in the department is good. There are secure systems for determining the attainment of pupils throughout the school and for monitoring their progress in all four science attainment targets. Results of tests and examinations are analysed and some effective steps have been taken to raise standards. For example, revision books have been purchased for Key Stage 3; a special teaching group has been created in Year 11 to target pupils close to the GCSE grade C/D borderline; there has been a positive drive to raise attainment in the science investigation component of the GCSE examination. Available resources are used effectively, and the recently appointed full-time technician provides very good support. Provision for the training of student teachers is good. There is a formal programme for the monitoring of teaching in the department, but it lacks focus and is not an effective vehicle for professional development in helping to raise the standard of all teaching to that of the best. This is an important issue for the department to grasp.

121. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has both breadth and balance. Schemes of work are detailed, though not uniformly so across all years. The use of ICT is developing well, with a good range of activities built into the schemes of work. Resources of equipment and books are adequate for the needs of the curriculum. Laboratory accommodation is adequate but old, and some of the bench surfaces are in poor condition.

122. Some of the weaker features of teaching referred to at the time of the last inspection remain, but otherwise there have been some improvements. Individual education plans (IEPs) are now widely in use for pupils with SEN, and standards have risen at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

123. Standards of attainment in art and design are improving. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show that, whilst the proportion of pupils meeting national expectations in 2000 remains below the national average, it is increasing. GCSE results for pupils at the end of Year 11 show good improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils gaining passes between grades A\* and C was close to the national average. All of the students who sat the A Level GCE examination at the end of their Sixth Form courses were successful. All five students achieved at least grade D, even the student who began the course with only grade D at GCSE level. These combined results are significantly better than at the time of the last inspection.

124. The work seen during inspection week indicates that these standards are being maintained. Although the work of pupils by the end of Year 9 remains below national expectations, these younger pupils soon adopt methods of developing their ideas from drawings into collage, prints, three-dimensional work or paintings. They use their sketchbooks to gather information and, in many cases, to complete well-presented, thoughtful work. A Year 8 class are making good gains in knowledge and technique while making papier-maché masks in the style of Gothic gargoyles, using drawings of themselves or their friends as starting points. There are times however, when their work is limited by under-developed observational drawing or over-simplified, almost formulaic, drawings of the human figure. Thus their technical skills are often better developed than their observational skills. Allowing for their limited previous experiences and their low levels of attainment when they arrive in the school, their achievement by the age of 13 is satisfactory.

125. The sudden jump in the standard of work of those pupils in Years 10 and 11, to around the national average by the end of Year 11, represents good achievement. There is a particularly marked improvement in the attainment of pupils during Year 10. They rapidly develop a belief in their creative ability, which allows them to produce good quality work. For example, producing confident, well-considered still-life paintings after looking at the work of Léger and Picasso. They are less content when analysing and collecting information through drawing, and often uncomfortable in varying the media or scale of their work. There are also occasions when they have difficulty relating previous learning to their current work or when they are required to make a personal response to the work of famous artists. Most pupils are able to evaluate the quality of their work but few can identify ways to improve it. The lack of motivation in a significant minority of Year 11 pupils is a cause for concern. Many are under-performing in spite of their teacher's best efforts. These pupils' over-reliance on their teachers reflects in part, inadequate preparation and research. There is a shortage of experimental work in both their sketchbooks and in the finished work they will eventually submit to the examination boards.

126. Students in the Sixth Form continue to develop their basic skills, but their poor personal research, experimentation and investigation in their earlier years is now preventing them from meeting or exceeding average standards of work elsewhere. The processes and techniques available to the entire age range, from Year 7 to Year 13 is limited to painting and drawing, with some opportunities to work with clay or other three-dimensional materials, and very basic printmaking. No pupils have opportunities to work with photography or textiles, and their work with ICT is very restricted. Those children who have SEN make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress, but an improved range of materials and processes could allow them to develop their talents to a much higher level.

127. The quality of teaching and learning in the department is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and in the Sixth Form. The better teaching and learning occurs in Years 10 and 11 where it is all good and occasionally very good. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good. Classes are invariably attentive, particularly at the beginnings of lessons when previous learning is reviewed and current work discussed. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers is a strength of the department and the way potentially difficult pupils respond to the subject and to their teachers is commendable. When tasks are sufficiently demanding, pupils reflect on their work and that of their friends. Since the last inspection, the department has been staffed by specialist teachers, which has led to significant improvements. At every stage, the teachers' management of their classes is good and sometimes very good. Their knowledge and understanding of their subject is good, particularly in Years 7 to 11. Very good, challenging teaching in a Year 10 lesson led to rapid gains in knowledge and understanding of early Cubism. These pupils were fully engaged with paintings based on their research and response to the methods developed by Picasso and Braque. Teachers add to their pupils' learning by an everyday use of subject specific language, while the written content of the courses makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy. Pupils' capacity for independent learning is still relatively undeveloped. Too much developmental work has a finished, almost precious quality, neglecting the experimentation, investigation and exploration that is increasingly central to art and design. When children do well, they receive, and appreciate, praise. The length of lessons means that some pupils have difficulty sustaining concentration until the end. The way teachers circulate in class, assessing their pupils' work, prompting and encouraging, is a positive aid to learning. There are occasions when teachers fail to summarise lessons or highlight the activity for the next lesson, thus denying pupils the opportunity to evaluate their work and reflect on the achievements of their classmates. The teachers should now carry their subject further by taking advantage of their good relations with their pupils to make greater demands on them, especially with reference to research. Teachers should also familiarise themselves with the particular SEN of some of their pupils to ensure these needs are properly met. Those few occasions when pupils' attitudes are less good are when small numbers of younger boys choose not to concentrate on their work. Some non-subject related gossip is a feature of some lessons, and the number of pupils chewing and the amount of gum stuck under chairs and tables is noticeable.

128. The curriculum in art and design is unsatisfactory, not due to lack of the coverage of the work of other artists, as at the last inspection, but because pupils have too few opportunities to work with ICT. Methods of assessment at every level in the subject are thorough and appropriate, although access to quality work to act as good examples at the end of Year 9 is not sufficiently in evidence. The leadership and management of the department is satisfactory overall. Whilst the head of department provides clear, sensitive direction for staff and pupils alike, he is yet to formalise the

monitoring of teaching and learning in a way that would assure the continual maintenance and improvement of standards in the department. Planning for short, medium and long term development of the subject lacks details of cost, time, staffing and resources necessary to implement such plans. There are unsatisfactory resources for learning in art. Photography, computer generated imagery, processes for more advanced printmaking on paper and fabric, though commonplace in art education, play no part in the work of the department. Books and other reference materials in the department and the school library are insufficient to support learning, particularly in the earlier years.

129. The department has improved and continues to improve. It has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, but there is room for more. The quality of teaching has improved. Attainment levels have been raised. Progress is now much more consistent, although a shift of emphasis towards investigative work is needed if pupils are to make further progress. Pupils' knowledge of art and famous artists has been improved, although many pupils lack a personal view. The creative atmosphere in the department is much better than was reported at the last inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

130. Standards of attainment overall at the end of Key Stage 3 are below national expectation. GCSE results for technology subjects taken as a whole are a little above average. In 2000, 52.9 per cent of pupils entered gained A\* to C grades against a national figure of 50 per cent. The percentage of pupils gaining A\* to G grades was also above average. However, if individual subjects within design technology are considered separately, there is a wide variation in the results. Textiles technology and graphic products achieved well above average results last year and have maintained an upward trend since the last inspection. Food technology results are above average and have improved since the last inspection. By contrast, results for child development and automotive engineering are well below average and have declined over the last three years. Resistant materials results have been particularly poor, with only 6.25 per cent of pupils entered gaining A\* to C grades last year. Girls perform better than boys in GCSE examinations, but subject comparisons indicate that all pupils do better in technology than in many of their other examination entries. There are no Sixth Form courses taking place in design technology.

131. Evidence from lessons seen and from scrutiny of pupils' work shows that standards are higher in food and textiles than in resistant materials and graphics. In food and textiles, pupils follow a structured course supported by detailed project booklets. This enables pupils of all abilities to develop an understanding of designing and making processes and to make an appropriate contribution to a design project. For example, with the help of suitably amended work booklets and learning support assistants, two pupils with special needs were able to take full part in a Year 7 textiles lesson. Project folders in resistant materials and graphics do not reflect the same degree of organisation. Many folders consist of untidily presented sheets that do not accurately represent the development of ideas. Many pupils do not develop independent research skills, relying instead on resource material provided by the school. Books and leaflets are carefully chosen to support projects in food and textiles, but pupils do not use a wider range of sources of information. ICT is not widely used either to improve presentation or to seek information for research.

132. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 matches the national average. Higher attaining pupils in food, textiles and graphics lessons are able to compile detailed design folders with good research techniques, and show that they can analyse the information in support of their project. For example, one Year 11 pupil used a combination of computer skills and hand drawn graphics to develop her cosmetics packaging project. Folders of lower attaining pupils are less well organised, compiled with less regard for accuracy and presentation, and contain less detail and depth of research. In general, the design work produced by girls is of a higher standard than that of boys. With few exceptions, pupils in resistant materials do not develop the basic graphic or practical skills to produce design work of quality. In a Year 11 resistant materials lesson, for example, pupils engaged in making storage units did not have their design work available and were therefore not able to make independent decisions. They relied heavily on the teacher to direct the course of their work and, in some cases, cut joints by machine. One girl, however, was able to produce an imaginative and well presented folder for her jewellery project. Whilst some higher attaining pupils do use a variety of research methods, many folders do not reflect a systematic approach to designing and making, and often consist of a loose collection of uncoordinated sheets.

133. The teaching seen was mainly satisfactory, and just over a third was good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy technology work and this contributes to their positive attitudes seen in many lessons. Pupils concentrate well. For example, Year 7 pupils in two textiles groups listened attentively to their respective teachers, despite the distraction of work in adjacent open plan areas. Teachers have developed good relationships with pupils and manage the classroom situation well. Teaching was best where teachers adopted a variety of appropriate strategies. For example, the teacher of a Year 7 textiles group used a combination of direct teaching, whole group and paired activities to introduce pupils to the characteristics of various textiles and their uses. Pupils, including those with special needs, were able to demonstrate their knowledge through verbal presentations to the group. Lessons in food and textiles are well structured and supported by good quality resource booklets which, in some cases, have been adapted to meet the needs of less able pupils.

134. The weaker teaching lacked structured planning both in individual lessons and for the course as a whole. Some Year 9 pupils in resistant materials, for example, are evaluating work by using a simple grid requiring only a tick in a box instead of a more sophisticated personal response. Progress in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson was also limited because it did not begin in a decisive way and pupils began their project work without the benefit of clear targets for the lesson. The quality of learning for pupils in automotive engineering is being adversely affected at a critical stage by the absence of the class teacher. In some cases, teachers miss the opportunity to review the lesson's work, reinforce what has been done and set the context for future lessons. Some introductory explanations are over long and do not engage pupils in practical activities at an early enough stage. Teachers are aware of the SEN of individual pupils and provide appropriate support for them. The progress of pupils with SEN matches that of other pupils and is aided by the effective use of learning support assistants. A variation in the quality of marking in some areas means that, whilst pupils are often praised and encouraged, they do not always get the necessary advice to enable them to improve. There is no formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching, but the department has identified the need to support teaching and curriculum development in resistant materials and has taken action to do so. A newly qualified teacher in the department receives good support. Where pupils fail to maintain their levels of

concentration throughout a full lesson, it is usually because the activity has been insufficiently varied or there have been too few short-term objectives for the lesson. For example, pupils in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson did not make full use of the time available because the long-term objective of finishing GCSE projects was not supported by specific time planning for the immediate lesson.

135. The leadership and management of the department is satisfactory overall, although the co-ordination of one area (resistant materials) is weak and standards are low in that area. Assessment procedures are thorough and a detailed assessment profile is maintained for each pupil. National Curriculum levels are used as part of this process, but are not always communicated to pupils. Descriptions of each level have not yet been made available to pupils. There is a need to refine the use of this process to make target setting a more effective tool for raising standards. Food and textiles courses have been thoroughly revised and schemes of work are matched to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The development of resistant materials has not taken place at a similar pace. The Key Stage 3 curriculum includes work in electronics, but there is no opportunity to continue this at Key Stage 4. Whilst textiles technology has two computerised sewing machines, there is no comparable equipment in resistant materials to introduce pupils to computer-aided design and manufacture. Accommodation and resources are adequate and managed well, but limited funding for capital investment has restricted the facilities for integrating new technology into project work at all levels.

136. Since the last inspection, the department has made improvements in the attainment of pupils in food and textiles, provided a greater range of teaching materials to suit pupils of different abilities, developed better assessment procedures, and received greater technician support in food and textiles. A more integrated approach to design and technology has been developed, but more work needs to be done to raise the standard of work in resistant materials and to address the difference in performance between boys and girls.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

137. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national expectation. In 1999 and 2000, Key Stage 3 teachers' assessments show that a below average close to 40 per cent of pupils were achieving at the expected National Curriculum Level 5 or over at the end of Year 9. The number of pupils achieving grades in the A\* to C range at GCSE was well below the national average until a marked improvement in 1999 which was continued in 2000. Girls' results are better than those for boys. They seem to be sustaining an improving trend, which is not matched by the boys' results. A Level entries are small but success rates are good. Four students entered in 1999 between them gained two B, one D and one E grade. In 2000, all five candidates gained at least grade E, with the highest a grade C.

138. Inspection evidence from lesson observations and from the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the standard of girls' work is much superior to that of boys. Raising boys' attainment is a priority of the department and measures are being actively followed in order to do this. Improving boys' literacy in terms of vocabulary and writing styles is one of the department's main aims. The GCSE syllabus has been changed to encourage boys in their coursework, and pupils are being given more practice in answering trial questions.

139. At Key Stage 3, basic geography skills are developed in Year 7. Pupils learn to use number well. They measure line and length, use co-ordinates and can locate places on the world map using latitude and longitude. They gain good knowledge of map symbols and contours, and construct and interpret line and column graphs in climate work. There is a variety of work, made more interesting and useful by the range of ways in which pupils record ideas. Pupils at Key Stage 3 understand concepts such as hierarchies and relate them to work on settlements. Higher attaining pupils combine imaginative writing with good illustration and produce newspaper articles, letters, brochures and extended writing on such diverse topics as 'The American Dream'. A Year 8 piece of work on migration and 'The Amazon – Protect or Develop' are examples of the many enquiry exercises undertaken by pupils throughout the key stage, that help to improve pupils' literacy skills. Lower attaining pupils complete worksheets and make useful and accurate notes. However, some work is unfinished and presentation is poor compared with the high standards usually seen, especially in work on physical geography, as in a Year 9 piece about the formation of the Niagara Falls. Towards the end of Key Stage 3 and into Key Stage 4, pupils steadily gain an understanding of more complex concepts, patterns and processes in geography. Year 10 pupils make links between employment sectors and this is developed in Year 11 work on the impact of tourism in the Peak District areas of Hartington and Bakewell. Use of number also improves as pupils progress through the school. In the Sixth Form, there is particle size analysis and pupils at Key Stage 4 use a variety of graphing techniques and bi-polar environmental analysis in research. ICT skills are not fully developed or utilised, but it is an improving picture with good examples of word processing and database work in Years 7 and 8, leading to a good display of work on the Rainforest. In Year 11, there are good examples of coursework using a variety of ICT techniques.

140. Every lesson seen at both key stages, and in the Sixth Form was judged good. Pupils are engaged promptly in lessons that are well planned and start with a clear statement of aims. Good question and answer and repetition techniques constantly reinforce knowledge and retention. Teachers have high expectation of pupils' work and behaviour, and this results in a good pace of work in lessons. The best lessons contain a variety of timed activities and selective use of audio/visual aids that help pupils maintain interest and concentration. Good teacher knowledge, linked to enthusiastic delivery, leads to challenging lessons and well motivated pupils. Lessons are delivered with a fair measure of humour in a non-threatening environment, which helps to build positive relations between pupils and teachers. Day-to-day marking is constructive and is supported by ever-improving long term assessment, which enables pupils to know how they stand and how to make further progress. Pupils with SEN and higher attaining pupils are enabled to make at least satisfactory progress by the choice and use of appropriate materials. All pupils are helped to maintain progress through the regular setting and review of homework.

141. As a consequence of this consistently good teaching, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils in geography lessons is good, and sometimes very good. Most enjoy the lessons and are positive in the way they approach work. Responses are spontaneous, though not always particularly fluent, and stem from good concentration and interest. They maintain a good pace, respond to challenges and work well in pairs and groups, as in a Year 11 class identifying economic indicators in less economically developed countries. Although the great majority of pupils are well motivated, there is some apathy in the work of boys in lower sets.

142. Leadership and management of the department is satisfactory overall. A well organised, committed team is working hard to maintain what is already good in the department, whilst improving the potential in its pupils. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet supported by regular lesson observation. Fieldwork, though adequate at some levels, does not yet extend to all years. The department needs to continue to build up a portfolio of moderated levelled work and the scheme of work needs to be updated to identify where ICT applications can be used.

143. There has been satisfactory progress since the last report. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Then it was satisfactory in most lessons, now it is good across all stages. Progress of pupils has also improved, and teachers are working hard to turn this progress into improved examination results at Key Stage 4, especially in the case of boys. Other areas of improvement are in the marking and correction of pupils' work and in the work with pupils with SEN.

## **HISTORY**

144. Standards of attainment in history have been rising over the past three years in terms of examination and test results. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected National Curriculum level (Level 5) or higher was in line with national expectations, which was a big improvement on the 1999 figures.

145. The proportions of pupils achieving GCSE grades A\* to C and grades A\* to G are roughly in line with or a little below the respective national averages. Almost one third of the pupils gained the higher grades A and B. Girls achieve well above the national average but boys' achievement is well below it. Some boys gain A grades, but a significant number are under-achieving due to their less than conscientious attitude to coursework.

146. In the Sixth Form, numbers in Year 13 are small, and students generally attain grades at the lower end of the scale. The introduction of new AS courses in Year 12 has helped to increase numbers and made possible a wider range of teaching strategies. Learning in the Sixth Form is sound, but the small numbers put a ceiling on how much pupil-to-pupil discussion can be attempted.

147. The majority of pupils, including those with SEN, are achieving satisfactorily and making sound progress at all key stages in relation to factual knowledge and understanding, use of terms and dates and a critical approach to sources. They also benefit from an initiative to improve their literacy skills. Pupils with SEN receive their full national curriculum entitlement and attain appropriate standards, with the help of special groupings in Years 7 and 8, and of support and specially adapted materials in Years 9 to 11.

148. At Key Stage 4, pupils acquire sound examination techniques as well as good knowledge and understanding of modern Irish History and of major concepts such as 'change' over several centuries, for example, in topics including surgery. Those boys who underachieve and bring down the average results do so on the coursework elements rather than on the formally taught material. Pupils with SEN and also higher attaining pupils receive suitably modified tasks to enable them to make progress.

149. Of the lessons inspected, 30 per cent were very good, 60 per cent were good and 10 per cent (one lesson) was satisfactory. Lessons are well controlled with clear ground rules. Most teachers are qualified in the subject and their subject knowledge is secure. They have clear aims, well prepared objectives, good lesson plans and structures. They make good use of time to optimise the smooth execution of long (75 minute) lessons. They adopt a friendly, helpful attitude, an encouraging manner and good questioning techniques appropriate to pupils' level of knowledge. Teachers make good use of resources, including visits and historical artefacts. When assessing pupils' work, they give feedback that informs the pupils about what they have done well and suggests how they can improve it. Pupils with SEN are well looked after. Pupils with SEN in Years 7 and 8 receive good sensitive teaching in a withdrawal group. In this group a very good lesson was observed about Norman and Saxon warriors and their battle techniques, complete with facsimile weapons, armour and clothing. The key feature making this a very good lesson was the teacher's imaginative resourcing that fired pupils' imaginations, leading to their full involvement in the written task that followed and better than usual results. Pupils at all key stages are quietly co-operative and respectful. They respond well to the good, mainly teacher-led, teaching they receive. Their quality of learning is further enhanced by good mechanisms that help to promote and measure progress.

150. The quality of the documentation and the explicit aims and values of the department indicate the very good leadership and management that underpins the good teaching, rising standards and effective management of time, staff, accommodation and resources. The head of department monitors lessons and pupils' work, and fosters good relations among the staff, which helps consistency of teaching and learning. Communication and relationships are good, with a positive impact on teaching and standards. The fact that the use of ICT has improved so much is largely due to the personal effort and example of the head of department. The school itself has set targets for improvement since 1997. These include raising achievement, redesigning materials so that they match better the range of pupils' attainment, introducing a wider range of teaching and learning styles, greater awareness of the status and individual needs of pupils with SEN, and more structured support for them. Each of these has been successfully tackled at departmental level.

151. There has been good improvement since the last report. At that time there were insufficient materials designed for pupils of differing attainment, and insufficient use was made of ICT. These weaknesses have been tackled with considerable success. This was most evident at Key Stage 3 in the excellent topic work in Year 9 based upon local sources, such as the 1841 census and visual material relating to Sutton and the surrounding district. This work was available on the specially constructed website on which busy, interested pupils, including those with special education needs, were happily combining a genuine historical source-based activity with the acquisition of ICT skills.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

152. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in ICT across the curriculum are assessed by teachers to be close to the national expectation. However, inspection evidence does not support this judgement, and standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the nationally expected level. Of the five strands in ICT, communication is dealt with successfully in English and data handling successfully in humanities. The other three areas, namely modelling, measurement and control, are less in evidence in any subject area. There are good examples of pupils using ICT for research and

word processing in humanities and English. Pupils are able to import artwork from other sources and use these effectively. They can organise information in different forms and make satisfactory presentations using a combination of word-processed text and graphics.

153. Most pupils at Key Stage 4 do not take ICT as an examination subject and fail to receive their full ICT entitlement through the cross-curricular arrangements presently in place. Even for the relatively small numbers taking the GCSE course, well below average proportions were successful in achieving either a grade A\* to C or a grade A\* to G in 2000. Twenty per cent of those entered achieved no qualification, due mainly to poor pupil attendance.

154. A Level success rates in the Sixth Form are low, with just under half achieving no grade. Pupils often take the course without either following the GCSE course or gaining the necessary experience of using ICT in their other subjects.

155. Standards achieved are affected at Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form by weaknesses in technical knowledge. Pupils can handle some software packages when working on coursework tasks, for example word processing, graphics, spreadsheets and data bases. They use a variety of fonts but their strategies for analysis, drafting and reworking are weak. Keyboard skills are reasonable and pupils can access the network, download files and manipulate text. All are confident in using the Internet to research topics and gather information. Key Stage 4 pupils develop folders, take a varied quality of notes and complete work related to projects, such as the mobile phone or individual topics in Year 11. Research skills vary, with little work done to prepare for the lesson. Strategies for catching up on missed coursework are not evident, though a high quality piece of geography coursework gives a good illustration of the high standard of work possible by really motivated pupils.

156. Overall the teaching is satisfactory, and half is good. There is a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, one lesson at Key Stage 4, which is due to lack of rigorous planning. Weaknesses include a lack of clarity in the key learning outcomes and of suitable timed tasks and resources. The teaching demonstrates secure subject knowledge and expertise across all key stages, but this knowledge is not extended into a wide enough repertoire of styles that would cater for all levels of attainment. One-to-one assessment of project work is used well in some lessons. In other lessons, the targets that have to be achieved are not sharp enough. Students are not sufficiently involved in the assessment process to know where they are and what they must do to achieve what is needed.

157. Standards of behaviour are generally satisfactory. The majority of pupils are well motivated, having chosen the subject at Key Stage 4 or in the Sixth Form. The pupils have respect for each other, the staff and the equipment. Relationships are a strength across all areas. There is evidence of collaboration when working on mini and major projects, but initiative and independence is limited to the higher attaining pupils, particularly the girls. A small number of boys in a Year 10 class responded with frustration and some misbehaviour when they were not clear enough about what they were doing and were finding the text they were using too difficult.

158. The co-ordination of ICT is unsatisfactory overall. There is a clear strategic plan with six areas that covers tasks, costs, time-scale, success criteria and evaluation. Student attainment is beginning to be closely monitored, but this is still in the early stage of value added comparisons. There is no monitoring of teaching or sharing of good practice. The senior teacher is involved in supporting other colleagues to develop their ICT expertise. The curriculum plan for Key Stage 3 is to move forward using the new Qualifications and Curriculum Authority scheme of work, but this will not be in place until the autumn of this year. Schemes of work exist at Key Stage 4, but they do not give teachers enough guidance or a detailed breakdown of tasks. At Key Stage 4, ICT is delivered to a small group of students via the third option block. Most other pupils do not have consistent enough experience of ICT in their other subjects, and they do not receive their legal entitlement in total. There is an urgent need to find a creative solution to fulfil the legal requirements. Post 16 opportunities include A/AS Level, Key Skills and Computer Literacy in Information Technology (CLAIT) courses. ICT consumables are well managed, with little sign of waste. Hardware and software are targeted well to match demands.

159. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Although there now is a common assessment system for Key Stage 4, standards of attainment have not improved and there has been no improvement in the statutory delivery of ICT at Key Stage 4. Tasks in some lessons still do not adequately cater for the needs of lower attaining pupils.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

160. Standards of attainment in modern foreign languages vary, owing to significantly different achievements in French and German. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' overall level of attainment was below the national average. Teachers' assessments in 2000 showed a significant improvement over those in 1999. The percentages of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 4 or above and Level 5 or above doubled, with the latter being only slightly below the national average. The figures do not always truly represent the achievement of the highest attaining pupils. If they opt to take German at GCSE but not French, it is their level in German that is recorded (after the equivalent of only four terms of teaching) irrespective of any higher attainment in French. Girls performed better than boys.

161. At the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of A\* to C grades achieved in GCSE French have been well below the national average for the last three years. By contrast, the percentage in German in 1998 and 2000 was well above national average. When a significant proportion of the year group's higher attaining pupils opt for the second language, this results in a depression of achievements in the first. Since 1998, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* to G in both languages has been higher than the national average, with girls again performing better than boys.

162. Standards of attainment in the Sixth Form vary widely from year to year, depending on student numbers and the level of attainment of the individual. The single candidate in 2000 achieved the highest A Level grades in both French and German. In 1999, a total of five entries resulted in three low pass grades. Standards in lessons seen show that all three candidates are on target to achieve pass grades at the end of this year.

163. Observation of work and lessons at Key Stage 3 reveals that standards are consistent with pupils' capabilities and continue to reflect the raising of achievement. In Year 7 French and Year 8 German, higher attaining pupils are working at a level above normal expectations. In Year 9, many middle-attaining pupils are confidently handling difficult constructions and grammar items. The accuracy of lower-attaining pupils is less consistent. All pupils submit a good amount of work, and, while showing competence in all four skills, they are slightly stronger in speaking and listening. At Key Stage 4, there is much confident and accurate written work among higher-attaining pupils, and some middle-attaining pupils are handling tenses and grammar with a good degree of competence. Standards of performance and commitment among lower attaining pupils are less reliable. In the Sixth Form, a considerable volume of work is covered, and there is firm evidence of steady progress in manipulating very sophisticated language in all four skills, with increasing confidence and accuracy. Pupils with SEN achieve well in the mixed ability Year 7 groups, and continue to achieve success at a level commensurate with their capabilities in the small sets in other year groups.

164. Overall, the quality of teaching in modern languages is good. Seventy per cent of lessons seen were good or better, and this was reflected across both key stages. Only one lesson was considered less than satisfactory. Teaching in the Sixth Form is good. Teachers conduct the lesson in the foreign language for the most part, but the proportion of French or German to English is sensibly adjusted to the needs and level of understanding of the group. All teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject, clear delivery and a high standard of fluency. Marking of work is consistent and frequent, but only reflects National Curriculum attainment levels or GCSE/GCE grading in formal assessments. Feedback is mainly in the form of short comments at Key Stages 3 and 4, but where more detailed comment is needed, for instance in ways to improve performance, it is appropriate and constructive. Feedback is particularly effective in the Sixth Form. Teaching is strongest when teachers know the needs of their pupils well, have high expectations of their performance, and actively involve as many pupils as possible in the work. The lessons are well planned, paced and timed, and include a variety of activities and techniques, covering different skills and effectively using different media, especially overhead projection. Where there are weaknesses in the teaching, pace is inconsistent, concentration is lost, and pupils are allowed to drift. Homework is used effectively to consolidate or extend the work of the lesson.

165. The result of this good teaching is that pupils' behaviour is mostly good. Pupils' are generally eager to contribute to classroom dialogue, concentrate well during listening exercises, and maintain a steady pace during reading and writing activities. Their attitude to homework is positive, and there are few incidents of non-completion. Standards of neatness and presentation are high. Pupils collaborate well in pair and group-work, and show positive attitudes towards more challenging work. Relationships between pupils are good, and for the most part they acknowledge the discipline of raising their hand before speaking, and listening to the contributions of others. However, negative attitudes and disruption on the part of a small minority of pupils can disturb the learning and progress of others. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils react positively to the use of the foreign language in class, but do not use it between themselves outside set tasks.

166. In good lessons, the quality of pupils' learning is enhanced by recall of previous knowledge at a simple level. Pupils then extend and consolidate that knowledge through increasingly challenging activities. This is combined with a pace appropriate to the group, and a variety of activities with a firm time limit for each. There is a deliberate emphasis on gently reinforcing knowledge of grammar in order to enhance pupils' basic literacy skills and to improve accuracy. The highest attaining pupils have access to extended learning materials, and those with SEN have worksheets adapted to their level of understanding. Both groups thus make good progress in line with their capabilities. Although the length of the lesson prevents more frequent and effective contact with the foreign language, the time is constructively used, with little incidence of 'winding down'.

167. The department is well organised and managed, and the members work well as a team. Monitoring of teaching takes place, but needs to be on a more frequent and regular basis. A very detailed scheme of work links course materials to National Curriculum attainment targets and levels at all stages. Teachers have their own records of pupils' attainments, but no central records are kept at either departmental or school level. Assessment has been used to inform curricular planning in the adoption of a new course in French and the choice of the written coursework option at GCSE. At Key Stage 3, pupils have the responsibility of setting their own targets for progress. All the teachers in the department are language specialists, and include a native speaker. The provision of text-books and learning materials is adequate. The department is awaiting ICT material to support delivery of the course. So far ICT work, though effective, has been limited to occasional word-processing. Classrooms are adjacent to each other, are well equipped, and are enhanced with effective displays of pupils' work.

168. The curriculum meets the statutory National Curriculum requirements. All pupils study French in Year 7, and the two higher-attaining sets start German as a second language in Year 8. At Key Stage 4, pupils can opt to study two languages at GCSE, but in practice numbers are small. Extra German lessons for higher level GCSE operate in the school. An Internet link with a school in Germany offers work experience exchanges in the Sixth Form. There is also a Year 9 trip to Boulogne in France.

169. Results in German have improved since the last inspection. One reason for this is that only high attaining pupils study it and up to two thirds choose to continue with it until GCSE, to the detriment of French.

## **MUSIC**

170. Standards in music meet national expectation at the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils achieve well and make good progress from Year 7 through to Year 11. There is no music in the sixth Form. GCSE results in music have improved from well below the national average for grades A\* to C and average points scores in 1998 to being at the national average against both criteria in 2000. The work of pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 groups indicates that standards have been maintained at this improved level and are average overall. Pupils with special needs achieve well, and almost always as well as other pupils in the class. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well. Extra-curricular music is a strength, including both vocal and instrumental work, and those attending work very hard to improve their performance. Around 4 per

cent of pupils receive instrumental tuition, which is fully subsidised by the school, and some high quality performance was

heard. One pupil is in a county orchestra and another in the county choir; two pupils are also members of Cantamus, a very high quality youth choir based in Mansfield. Singing is a significant feature of music in the school, both inside and beyond the curriculum, and is built on teacher expertise.

171. In one Year 8 class, boys and girls sang very well with beautiful tone in up to four parts. They showed good tuning and clear diction using a forward tone, and were fully aware of how well they were singing. The sets of variations, which were part of a Year 9 project using a mixture of tuned percussion, flutes and clarinets, were well played, including a rhythmically complex section. In another Year 9 class on the same topic, groups devised their own versions, which included some improvisation, and their playing was generally of a high standard. In the combined Year 10 and 11 GCSE class, the girls were more fluent in using language to describe music than the boys. The whole class ensemble, playing some Handel, used the available skills and instruments well in an effective performance.

172. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching is characterised by good planning and preparation, linked to clear targets which are shared with pupils. Organisation and management are good, especially with the more challenging pupils, and only occasionally did the needs of such pupils limit full access to the curriculum. Good use of varied activities was seen in lessons, and this is very important since many pupils find the lessons too long. Relationships are good, and teachers know pupils well. The best teaching involves singing and other performance skills, and listening is integrated into all aspects. Overall, pupils learn by doing and then refining their skills. Some very good focussed questioning was seen at Key Stage 4, where listening skills were developed and musical awareness grew. Above all, the most effective teaching in music demonstrates enthusiasm and vitality. Pupil response at Key Stage 3 is very good, and excellent at Key Stage 4. Pupils are open and positive, and cope well with the difficult acoustic. Most pupils are very keen and enthusiastic. In the best lessons, hard work was linked to a sense of fun. Although some pupils need very firm and positive management, they respond very well. The short attention span of some pupils is an issue. More girls than boys play instruments, clearly shown in one very good Year 9 class.

173. The department is well led, with the monitoring of teaching and learning in a faculty context effectively supporting development, and raising standards. The curriculum meets requirements and full account has been taken of recent changes. The option choices for Key Stage 4 limit access to music and the other arts, and there is no Post 16 music provision. The lesson length of 75 minutes is too long to be efficient. Information technology is used in music teaching at both key stages. The scarcity of resources in music technology and tuned percussion limit access to higher standards and a broader curriculum. Assessment is thorough and effective. It uses clear criteria and balances a system of pupil self-assessment with teacher assessments at the end of each topic. The department is already working on the new attainment target levels to further refine the scheme, focussing on definition, exemplification and use.

174. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made in all areas. Resources have improved, although there are still weaknesses in music technology, IT and tuned percussion, which inhibit pupil attainment. The music curriculum now satisfies National Curriculum requirements overall, and it includes some aspects of IT at Key Stage 3. The major issue at the last inspection concerned the accommodation, especially in terms of its very poor acoustics; this is to be completely refurbished later this school year, following the award of a specific grant for the purpose.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

175. Overall attainment at the end of the Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with national expectations. Thirty nine pupils entered GCSE physical education in 2000 and almost half obtained at least grade C. These results are in line with the national average and show a slight improvement on 1999. All pupils who entered A Level in 2000 passed at grade E or above, which is an improvement on previous years.

176. Pupils' involvement and attainment in extra-curricular sport are very good. These activities are a strength of the department, and specialist and non-specialist staff give generously of their own time. This is appreciated by the pupils and is reflected in the high level of pupil participation. Pupils who take advantage of these opportunities make very good progress. This is well illustrated by those who participate in trampoline club and reflected in the success achieved by many of those involved.

177. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils show competence in a range of games skills and are generally making satisfactory progress. In netball, spatial awareness is developed well, with many pupils demonstrating a good understanding of strategies for losing a marker. Pupils also have a sound knowledge and understanding of the principles of volleyball, even though many find difficulty in acquiring and developing the skills of the game, such as the volley pass. They are able to select effectively and apply the skills learned in the context of a game. With a few exceptions, the capacity for observation, evaluation and analysis of skills and constructive comments on others' work remain under developed during this key stage. Most pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress in lessons as they consolidate their knowledge and improve skills through practice. There is no significant difference in attainment and progress between boys and girls.

178. Progress in the long term is evident during Key Stage 4 where standards continue to improve in games activities, for example in basketball where pupils apply their skills effectively in the lay-up shot. Good teamwork develops in both basketball and football, where pupils effectively apply a variety of well-developed social skills. Appropriate selections of off-site leisure activities are introduced which prove very popular. In the fitness option, pupils show a good understanding of the effects of exercise on the body, and apply their knowledge effectively in the creation of aerobic warm up exercises and routines.

179. Observed work and lessons in school mirror the standards achieved in examinations. Pupils have a secure understanding of theoretical aspects of their course, and the school has established good strategies for recording personal achievements and the development of personal targets. Standards in basketball and badminton are generally good. Pupils have a good understanding of strategies for movement analysis and the process for providing feedback. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress in this subject, although there are occasions when teaching styles do not match the needs of some of these pupils.

180. Overall teaching is at least satisfactory, and more than half of it is good. The teachers have good subject knowledge. This is demonstrated through both practical activities and examination coursework. Medium term planning throughout the department has improved since the last inspection, and now has clear learning objectives and criteria for assessment. However, some modifications need to be made, to ensure teaching more accurately matches the abilities of the pupils. Teaching strengths include skilful questioning, which is often used to consolidate knowledge and reinforce learning. A range of teaching styles is increasingly being employed, but these are not yet fully in place. Learning is predominately teacher directed, with not enough opportunities provided for independent learning. Opportunities for pupil involvement in evaluating and improving their own and others' performances is rarely included during lessons other than at examination level. Exceptions to this are in gymnastics and outdoor and adventurous activities. In orienteering, teaching is very good where problem solving and guided discovery methods are used.

181. The result of this satisfactory and good teaching is that pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. Most pupils are well motivated, enthusiastic and keen to participate. Behaviour is good and the majority of pupils show commitment to what they are doing, respond well and sustain concentration on tasks. There are very good relationships between pupils, who often work sympathetically and collaboratively together. Good relationships exist between pupils and staff, and boys and girls also work effectively together in mixed groups. The promotion of these positive relationships is a strength of the department.

182. All areas of activity taught meet the statutory requirements at Key Stage 3, although the outdoor and adventurous activities programme of study is still being developed. A very good health and safety policy is in place, but risk assessments need to be carried out at all times. On one isolated occasion during an observed lesson this was not the case. There is a need to extend the provision of Key Skills, including the use of information and communications technology, throughout all key stages, along with the further development of the numeracy, literacy and thinking skills.

183. The department has continued to improve on many fronts since the last inspection. Developing leadership skills have led to the improved organisation and management of the department. These improvements have led to the scheme of work being re-written, and significant improvements being made in the assessment and recording procedures. The range of teaching styles used has improved and is beginning to more accurately meet the needs of all pupils.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

184. This is a good department where most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. On average, pupils come to the school with attainment below those found nationally, and the RE of many has been limited. During Key Stage 3, they acquire a broad grounding in Christianity and other major world religions in accordance with the requirements of the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus. As a result, their attainment is brought into line with national expectations by the age of fourteen.

185. Pupils' knowledge of specific terms is good. There is a drive to teach them appropriate vocabulary, and this contributes well to their literacy skills. Understanding related to the second attainment target, 'learning from religion', has improved. Particular attention is given to this in order to encourage pupils to think more reflectively, to help them find their purpose in life and to develop worthwhile values. This also means that RE makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

186. In this key stage, the attainment of some higher attaining pupils is above national levels, although as yet the school has not formally identified its gifted and talented children. The attainment and progress of pupils with special needs, who are withdrawn from regular classes, is good in relation to their prior attainment. They cover the same ground as the others through schemes of work that are well adapted to their needs, and they benefit from the high level of attention. Those making the least progress are in some lower sets where the teaching does not engage them well.

187. Pupils' skills in applying ICT techniques to RE are good. The subject supports ICT attainment well, and also encourages numeracy in Year 7. In Year 7, pupils conduct an investigation of attitudes to Christmas. They produce numerical data and interpret it using ICT. Their charts, graphs and written conclusions on display in the RE rooms demonstrate their cross-curricular achievements. Other work done in Years 8 and 9 also utilises and enhances ICT skills.

188. Progress continues to be good in Key Stage 4 for those pupils who opt for GCSE Religious Studies. Their results have been 100 per cent in the A\* to G range for the past three years. Although in terms of grades A\* to C this subject's results are below national levels, the results of pupils following this course are considerably higher in this subject than in any other, and the department is rightly proud of the work it does on their behalf. Their success is due to effective teaching. It is particularly effective in producing a high standard of coursework and good examination skills. It is not possible for pupils to continue RE at A Level in this school or its neighbours, which is a disappointment to higher attaining RE students.

189. Attainment by the age of sixteen is unsatisfactory for other pupils, whose experience of RE is limited to the few lessons within the PSE course. This is not surprising as such lessons represent only one per cent of their total curriculum time. Within the limited time constraints, teachers exploit their opportunities well and pupils make good progress. The topics are well chosen, and the lessons are effective in enabling pupils to learn about and to consider a

number of the 'ultimate questions' of life and death, suffering and happiness. Nevertheless, continuity is a problem, and it is not possible to cover anything more than a fraction of what is required by the locally Agreed Syllabus. As a result, pupils do not receive their entitlement, worthwhile learning is curtailed, and there is no accreditation for their work.

190. There is no RE in the Sixth Form. In this respect, and in respect of the inadequate RE for pupils in Years 10 and 11 not studying the subject at GCSE, the school continues to be in breach of statutory requirements. This was a key issue in the last inspection.

191. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Most of the lessons seen were good. There was also some very good teaching, and only a little (one lesson) remains unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, management skills are good, the pupils are known well and relationships are good. Teaching is energetic, with enthusiasm and real warmth shown for the pupils and their achievements, and they in turn respect their teacher. In these lessons, there is good planning to give suitable challenge, with variation and enjoyment, and work that gives a balance of the two attainment targets. The aims of lessons are made clear at the beginning of the lesson, they are followed through, and the time is used well. These good quality lessons are well provided with stimulating resources. Standards of behaviour in these lessons are good, and since the last inspection the attitudes and motivation of pupils with regard to RE has improved. This is due to the hard work of the subject leader in devising challenging lessons that are also interesting and varied. Generally, pupils sustain their efforts throughout the long lessons and make reasonable efforts at their homework.

192. In the few weaker lessons, aims are not followed through or reviewed at the end. Some lesson endings are poor, with tired pupils and a loss of impetus. In these lessons, tasks are sometimes not made accessible enough for lower attaining pupils who need more direction. The pupils are too passive for long periods, and not enough attention is given to making their learning enjoyable. Occasionally the homework is set at the very end of the lesson and not written on the board, which is difficult for slower pupils to cope with. If there were a more proactive school policy for monitoring the standards of teaching through observation, it would be easier to share the good practice that mainly characterises this department. There is still some RE teaching by non-specialists. The seventy-five minute lessons are too long for lower attaining pupils in particular, and they are sometimes flagging by the end. Some written work assignments show very good motivation by pupils. This was true of some of the pilgrimage projects in Year 9 and the coursework in GCSE.

193. Marking is well done to encourage and inform, and the systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress are of good quality. This is an important area of improvement. The good use of assessment information has led to appropriate additional attention now being given to the second attainment target. However, the department's system for using 'levels of attainment' in reverse order to the national system, is confusing both for pupils and parents.

194. The department is well managed and led from the front. The priorities for the future are appropriate and accord with the school's commitment to raise attainment. Parents have commented favourably on the push for standards in RE. The schemes of work have been rewritten well to meet the requirements of the county's Agreed Syllabus and to improve the quality of lessons. The pupils' standards of learning are monitored through regular scrutiny of their written work. The RE team

collaborate well.

195. The RE department gives good support to the personal development of pupils by providing opportunities for social activities and outings in the informal curriculum of the school, in addition to their strong provision for all aspects of personal development within lessons. They also take a lead in the school's wide programme of support for charities. The links with Third World charities are making an important contribution to the global dimension of education as well as to moral development.

196. Since the last inspection, the department has worked hard to address all the issues raised that are within their remit to change. Significant improvements have been made, though there is still work to be done in raising the quality of teaching overall to the level of best practice. Resources have improved significantly since the last inspection. They have been brought up to a satisfactory level by additional funds that have allowed the purchase of some good quality sets of textbooks. These include foundation level books for the slower learners. Nevertheless, coverage of RE in the library stock remains low.