

# INSPECTION REPORT

**SAINT PETER'S RC COMPREHENSIVE  
SCHOOL**

Middlesbrough

LEA area: Redcar and Cleveland

Unique reference number: 111762

Headteacher: Mr J Cornally

Reporting inspector: Dr P I Crumpton  
2784

Dates of inspection: 30 April – 4 May 2001

Inspection number: 193645

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Normanby Road South Bank Middlesbrough
Postcode:	TS6 6SP
Telephone number:	01642 453462
Fax number:	01642 455010
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Neil McNicholas
Date of previous inspection:	20 January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2784	Philip Crumpton	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
11358	Vicki Lamb	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
2690	Martin Kerrison	Team inspector		<p>How well are pupil taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p>
1464	Shona Walton	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
15036	Janice Watson	Team inspector	Mathematics	
17274	Howard Flavell	Team inspector	Science	
12970	Susan Simper	Team inspector	Art and design	
28089	Tim Brotherhood	Team inspector	Design and technology	
14521	Judith Dunning	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>History</p>	
27351	Mike Stanton	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
20620	David Perkins	Team inspector	Music	
15154	Ian Spode	Team inspector	Physical education	
11913	Martin Howard	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
8425	Vinod Hallan	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	

The inspection contractor was:

Staffordshire and Midlands Consortium

Mr I H Jones  
Kingston Centre  
Fairway  
Stafford  
ST16 3TW

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</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>13</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>36</b>



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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is an 11-16 Roman Catholic Comprehensive situated in a socio-economically deprived area of Middlesbrough. The local education authority (LEA) is Redcar and Cleveland. With 418 pupils on roll, the school is smaller than most other secondary schools. The number of pupils entering the school has remained steady and is about the same as it was when the school was last inspected in 1997.

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average and is higher than it was in 1997. The percentage of pupils on the school's register for special educational needs is above the national average and has risen since the last inspection. The number of pupils with statements of educational need is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is low.

Since the last inspection, pupils' prior attainment on entry has been low. However, levels are rising. The prior attainment of pupils entering Year 7 in 2000, based on their scores in national tests at age 11, was above average. This change is partly attributable to parents' growing confidence in the school.

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

This is a good and effective school. By the time they reach 16, pupils are achieving well compared with their prior attainment although overall standards are below the national average. The quality of teaching is good and the school is very well led. Effective leadership and management have created a clear commitment to improvement which is raising standards and the school continues to provide satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils' examination results, at age 16, are well above the average for pupils with similar prior attainment.
- Boys' attainment is close to the national average for boys.
- Pupils' behave very well around the school. Their attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good.
- Relationships are good throughout the school.
- Pupils' personal development is very good. Their spiritual and moral development is very good, and their social and cultural development good.
- There is good teaching and learning in all years.
- A very caring staff is providing good educational and personal support for pupils.
- Relations with parents are good.
- The headteacher and senior staff are providing very good leadership.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

### What could be improved

- Using assessment more effectively to improve pupils' standards.
- Meeting the needs of a range of ability within classes to help all pupils make maximum progress.
- Developing pupils' literacy skills to help their learning in all subjects.
- Using teachers' observations of lessons to further improve the quality of teaching.
- Planning whole-school and departmental developments more effectively to improve standards.

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

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

There has been substantial improvement since the school was last inspected in January 1997. Since 1998, results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations have significantly improved and the attendance rate has risen year by year. There are now strong links with primary schools. In addition important progress has been made on the key issues identified in 1997: the teaching of mathematics has improved; the deficiencies in learning support for pupils over 14 have been rectified and the school's development planning now identifies responsibilities, timescales and costings. These improvements have resulted in an improved reputation for the school and a growth in parents' confidence.

Issues from the last inspection where there has been insufficient improvement are the development of pupils' independent learning skills; teachers' use of assessment to identify pupils' progress, meet the needs of individual pupils and guide planning; the analysis of attainment to track achievement by gender, ethnicity and ability grouping, and the clarification of targets in development planning.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

In 2000, the attainment of pupils in national tests for 14 year olds in English, mathematics and science was above the average for similar schools. Attainment was well below the national averages although it has risen over recent years in line with the national rate of improvement. Results for 14 year olds in other statutory assessments in 2000 were significantly above the national average in physical education and above the national average in art and design. Attainment in other subjects was below national averages and it was well below in geography, history and information and communication technology.

The attainment of 16 year olds in GCSE examinations is well above the average for similar schools

when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account. Results for 16 year olds in 2000 were well below national averages for those attaining five or more A\*-C and A\*-G grades. However, boys' attainment was close to the national average for boys. The school's results have improved considerably since 1999 and at a higher rate than improvement nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades was below the national average in all subjects, but overall attainment using pupils' average points scores was close to the average in art and design, media studies, physical education and religious education.

Generally, pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment and this was reflected in the standards seen during the inspection. Overall, pupils were learning effectively and making good progress. There was no significant difference between the attainment of the small number of pupils with English as an additional language and the majority of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs were making satisfactory progress by the time they reached 14, and the majority of those entered for GCSE achieved at least five grades A\*-G in 2000.

Standards of literacy remain low. Standards of numeracy are average in mathematics but pupils' skills are generally under-developed in other subjects.

In 2000, the school's GCSE results exceeded its target for pupils' overall average points score. They fell just short of the targets for five or more A\*-C and one or more A\*-G grades. The target for five or more A\*-C grades in 2001 is appropriate and realistic but that for average points score is extremely challenging.

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes. They are keen and take pride in their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is an orderly community. Pupils behave well during lessons and behaviour around the school is good.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good, although there are not enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Relationships are good.
Attendance	Attendance remains below the satisfactory level but it has steadily improved.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour contribute significantly to their achievement and progress. Behaviour was unsatisfactory in only a very small number of lessons seen. The good relationships also contribute to pupils' achievement and to the school's caring ethos. Pupils are not given sufficient encouragement to be active and independent learners.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is generally good. During the inspection, in 96 percent of the 112 lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory; it was good or better in 55 percent of lessons. In only five lessons was it judged to be unsatisfactory.

Generally, teachers know their subjects well, lessons are effectively planned, class management is very good and there are good relationships with pupils. Teachers employ effective teaching strategies although the range is somewhat narrow.

Teachers' marking is often positive and encouraging but it rarely tells pupils what they have achieved and what they need to improve. Teachers are not fully successful in dealing with the range of ability within classes. The teaching of literacy and numeracy (in subjects other than mathematics) is unsatisfactory. The school has not yet sufficiently developed a whole-school approach to these aspects.

Homework is generally satisfactory but it is not sufficiently used to extend pupils' knowledge and skills. There is some inconsistency amongst teachers in the amount of homework set.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There are good links with partner primary schools. There are too few opportunities for pupils to follow a curriculum related to the world of work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	All these pupils have access to a broad-based curriculum. There is good provision for their in-class support and for individual tuition.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small number of pupils are well integrated into the school and well cared for. A good proportion of these pupils are higher attainers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision is a strength of the school. Pupils' moral and spiritual development are very good; their social and cultural development are good, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to study ethnic minority cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a secure environment and cares well for pupils. There is good personal and educational support for them. Assessment is not being well used in setting pupils clear and challenging targets for improving their learning.

The curriculum is relevant and appropriate. The National Curriculum is effectively covered overall and pupils with special educational needs have access to the whole curriculum. Pupils' welfare is well looked after and child protection is good. The school works very well with parents.

There is too little provision for vocational education and this runs contrary to the ethos of the school. Assessment is not contributing sufficiently to pupils' progress.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and well managed. There is a strong commitment to improving standards and change is being managed well. Planning for improvement needs more sharply focused targets, with linked procedures for evaluation.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and well-informed about the school. They are effectively carrying out their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher is usefully analysing its results. The school is keeping a check on pupils' behaviour and attendance. Monitoring of teaching and of the implementation of policies are not yet sufficiently effective.
The strategic use of resources	Generally resources are good and are effectively used to enhance learning.

The headteacher is providing a strong sense of direction and he is well-supported by the leadership team, staff and governors. Middle managers generally provide effective leadership although one-person departments need more support. Principles of Best Value are being applied well. There is a good match of staff to the demands of the curriculum. There are good resources and accommodation. However, there are no drama facilities or separate careers library. There is still no medical room.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The progress of pupils.</li><li>• Teachers' expectations of pupils.</li><li>• Personal development of pupils.</li><li>• Good leadership and management.</li><li>• Good teaching.</li><li>• The approachability of the school.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount of homework.</li><li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li></ul>

Findings from the inspection support all the positive views of parents, although teachers could have higher expectations of the achievement of Year 7 pupils.

The inspectors judged that there was a very good range of activities outside lessons. However, they agreed with those parents who had reservations about the quality and consistency of homework. It too often consists of completing work begun in school and it is not used sufficiently to extend pupils' learning. There is some inconsistency in the amount of homework set.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall, the attainment of pupils in tests and examinations is well above the average for those schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The attainment of pupils in the GCSE examinations at age 16 is also well above average for pupils with similar levels of prior attainment. When the pupils' results at ages 14 and 16 are compared with results of all pupils nationally, however, attainment is well below average.
2. Pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 in 2000 was above the average for similar schools. However, pupils' test results when compared with results nationally were well below average. This has been the case every year since the school was last inspected but attainment has improved over the last few years, broadly in line with the rate of improvement nationally.
3. In English, test results at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were close to the average for similar schools, but the proportion of pupils achieving the National Curriculum benchmark Level 5 or better was well below the national average. Test results since 1997 have been volatile. An improvement in 1998 was followed by decline in 1999 and 2000 to the point they were at when the school was last inspected. Results in 1999 and 2000 were also significantly below national averages when pupils were assessed by their teachers. There is no significant difference between the test results of boys and girls, but when comparison is made with the national averages for each gender, boys are performing better. This is in contrast to the picture nationally in this subject.
4. In mathematics, test results at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were well above the average for similar schools. However, the percentage of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 5 or above was well below the national average. Results fell slightly from 1997 to 1999 but in 2000 they improved significantly and attainment was higher than it was when the school was last inspected. Pupils' attainment when assessed by their teachers also improved significantly in 2000, although results remained well below the national average. There is no significant difference in performance between girls and boys.
5. In science, test results at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were above the average for similar schools but well below the national average for the percentage of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 5 or above. Results fell from 1997 to 1999 but an improvement in 2000 brought attainment to a level similar to that at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' attainment in 2000, when assessed by their teachers, was also well below the national average. Boys are performing slightly better than girls both in actual results and when those results are compared with the national averages for each gender.
6. In the other subjects of the National Curriculum in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 and above was significantly above the national average in physical education and above the national average in art and design. It was below the national averages in all other

subjects – significantly below in geography, history and information and communication technology.

7. Overall, across the subjects, boys were attaining slightly better than girls, although their results in design and technology and music were very much lower than girls' and considerably below the national averages for boys. In physical education, boys' results were slightly higher than girls', but both were well above the national averages for their genders. Girls' results in information and communication technology and modern foreign languages were well below the national averages for their genders.
8. The very low prior attainment of pupils with special educational needs is inevitably reflected in their National Curriculum assessments. Many pupils in the lower ability groups in Years 7 to 9 are working at levels below those expected for pupils in their age group. Their lack of proficiency in literacy skills limits their attainment in all areas of the curriculum.
9. At the end of Year 11 in 2000, the overall attainment of 16 year olds in GCSE examinations, using their average points scores and taking their prior attainment into account, was well above the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A\*-C grades was well above the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-G grades was close to the average for these schools.
10. Compared with schools nationally, the percentages of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C and A\*-G grades in 2000 were well below national averages. Attainment was slightly higher using pupils' average points scores but it remained below the national average. However, the number of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades has risen from 19 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2000. The school's improvement in its results is above the trend of improvement nationally. The substantial rise in attainment from 1997-2000 has been recently rewarded with a School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Employment. Attainment is higher than it was at the time of the last inspection.
11. Overall, boys' results in GCSE examinations in 2000 were higher than girls'. They were close to the national average for boys whereas girls' results were well below the average for their gender. Boys' overall attainment has risen year by year since 1996 whereas girls' results have fluctuated. Attainment of boys is significantly above and that of girls above, what it was when the school was last inspected.
12. Pupils' overall attainment in GCSE examinations in 2000, using average points scores, was close to the national average in art and design, media studies, physical education and religious studies. The percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades was below the national average in all subjects, although results were relatively high in the graphics element of design and technology. Results in art and design, English, mathematics, physical education and religious education had improved from the previous year. Comparing pupils' results in separate subjects with their overall average across all their subjects, pupils were achieving well in art and design, media studies, design and technology, English Literature, physical education and religious education. In mathematics, science, English and modern foreign languages pupils' results were lower than their average across their other subjects.

13. Although pupils' attainment is very low when compared to national standards, pupils are now achieving well when their prior attainment is taken into account. The attainment of 16 year olds in GCSE examinations in 2000, when related to their National Curriculum test results in 1998, indicate that they had made good progress between the ages of 14 and 16. Boys' results, in particular, had considerably improved. When their results in the 1998 tests is compared with their performance in GCSE exams in 2000, boys had made better progress than girls. This is partly due to the fact that the school has recently concentrated its efforts on improving the performance of boys and partly due to the incidence of poor attendance amongst some girls.
14. The good progress that pupils are making when their prior attainment is taken into account was reflected in their achievement in lessons observed during the inspection. Generally, pupils were attaining more highly than test and examination results would suggest, although standards were still below what is expected for pupils of this age range. Standards were judged to be close to what is typical nationally in over 50 percent of lessons observed. For 11 year olds in Year 7, this figure rose to 65 percent which reflects the higher attainment of pupils entering the school in 2000.
15. The difference between the standards observed during the week of the inspection and those reached under test and examination conditions is partly accounted for by the good quality of teaching seen across all year groups and the positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils. These factors produced a good climate for learning. Pupils were observed to be learning effectively in almost all lessons and to be making good progress in a good proportion of these. In only a very small number of lessons was pupils' learning judged to be unsatisfactory. In addition, in lessons teachers were providing valuable support for pupils who often lacked confidence as learners and needed reassurance that they were succeeding. Such help would not be available to pupils sitting tests and examinations.
16. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in relation to their prior attainment by the time they reach 14. This progress is maintained in Key Stage 4. The lack of support for such pupils over 14, identified at the time of the last inspection, has been rectified. At the end of Year 11 in 2000, 14 pupils who were placed on the special educational needs register when they entered the school had achieved three or more grades D-G in GCSE examinations, with eight of these achieving eight or more passes.
17. Standards of literacy across the school are below average and this is adversely affecting pupils' attainment and progress, as it was at the time of the last inspection. In all subjects pupils' achievement is being restricted by their difficulties in expressing themselves effectively in writing.
18. Standards of numeracy are average in mathematics; and the school's Numeracy Policy maps out where numeracy skills could be developed in other subjects. However, there is little evidence that developing numeracy across the curriculum is systematically planned for and during the inspection there were few examples of numeracy being used outside mathematics.
19. In 2000, the school's GCSE results exceeded its target for the overall average points score.

They fell just short of the targets for five or more A\*-G and one or more A\*-G grades. In deciding its targets, the school predicts pupils' individual results from their prior attainment. Based upon this, particularly the results of National Curriculum tests from 1997 to 1999, its target for five or more A\*-C grades in 2001 is appropriate and realistic; its target for average points score is very challenging.

20. The views of the large majority of parents that standards and progress are improving are largely confirmed by the findings from the inspection. However, the progress made by girls has not kept up with the overall improvement in results from 1998 to 2000.

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

21. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Behaviour during the inspection was good overall, and often very good. Pupils' personal development is very good. Although the attendance rate remains below the nationally expected figure, it has improved steadily in recent years. Parents' views that the school promotes good attitudes and values, such as caring and respect for others, and that behaviour in the school is good are confirmed by the findings from the inspection.
22. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They show that they are keen to participate and take pride in their achievements. Pupils take care of materials and equipment and when clearing up. Opportunities for pupils to exercise initiative, responsibility and independent learning are not yet sufficiently developed. They respond positively to the limited opportunities that are provided for them to take responsibility for their own work. However, many arrive at lessons without basic equipment and when homework is set it is not always written down. This lack of independence in learning contributes to pupils' continued below average performance in tests and exams.
23. In all but a very few cases pupils behave well during lessons. They remain focused on their work, respond quickly to requests from teachers and are willing to answer questions. High levels of responsibility are shown in the way pupils support and help each other. Where behaviour is less than satisfactory, some pupils do not pay sufficient attention, are reluctant to respond to teachers' questions, and generally do not sustain concentration on their work.
24. Behaviour around school is very good overall. Movements between classrooms and outdoor areas are conducted in an orderly manner and pupils often display courtesy to adults by holding doors and allowing them to pass. They approach assembly with reverence; and conduct themselves in a mature and sensible way when they use the various areas of school open to them before school, during breaks and at lunchtimes. Only one pupil was permanently excluded from school for serious misconduct last year and no pupil has been permanently excluded so far this year. On the whole, pupils who have previously behaved poorly learn the need for self-discipline when the school's behaviour strategies are put into place, especially when their parents work with the school to guide their child. In particular, pupils who experience difficulties in maintaining a high standard of behaviour make effective use of the support offered by specialist workers. The school deals effectively with any incidents of bullying that may occur.

25. The personal development of pupils is very good overall. In assemblies pupils are challenged to think about others' experiences and feelings and take part in these activities in good spirit. A report on a separate inspection of collective worship is available. Pupils respond with interest to issues with a moral or social focus. When asked for assistance, pupils are very willing to share information and give directions. Participation in extra-curricular activities is good and pupils willingly represent the school in activities such as sporting competitions and fundraising. Relationships in school are good. During lessons, pupils and staff generally get along well and pupils' personal development benefits, for instance, through enhancement of their self-esteem. During registration pupils chat in a friendly manner amongst themselves and with their tutor when the opportunity is provided. However, in a minority of lessons and tutor groups, relationships are cool or adults do not take the opportunity to extend pupils' social skills.
26. Senior members of staff maintain a high profile around school and this encourages good behaviour whilst providing opportunities for senior staff and pupils to meet informally. This makes a positive contribution to relationships in school, as does the skilful management of behaviour by teachers during lessons and tutor sessions. Non-teaching staff have good relationships with pupils and contribute significantly to the quality of experiences available in school.
27. Attendance remains below the level considered satisfactory nationally but has shown a small increase recently. The poor attendance amongst some girls is affecting their performance in GCSE examinations. Low attendance is having a particularly adverse effect on the attainment of Year 11 pupils in English and mathematics. The great majority of pupils arrive punctually at the beginning of each day and lessons generally start on time.

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

28. Teaching continues to be a strength of the school and is good overall. Of 112 lessons observed only five were judged unsatisfactory. 96 percent of lessons were judged satisfactory or better and 56 percent good or better. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between key stages. Teaching was excellent in religious education, very good in design and technology, and good in English, mathematics, science, music and physical education. It was satisfactory in art and design, geography, history and modern foreign languages. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs received good teaching when taken out of classes for literacy and numeracy tuition. They also received good support in class during their normal lessons.
29. The teaching of numeracy during mathematics lessons is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy is unsatisfactory because teachers lack adequate knowledge of the techniques and approaches developed in the National Literacy Strategy.
30. Teaching has a number of strengths. Management of pupils is a clear strength of teaching. Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are almost always good, underpinned by mutual respect. There are very positive relationships between pupils with

special educational needs and their teachers. As a result, behaviour within lessons is orderly and pupils apply themselves to the work in hand. Lower attaining pupils benefit from small teaching groups and the additional teacher time per pupil this allows. Expectations of behaviour are high. The school's effective range of behaviour management strategies and support ensures that, where problems are encountered, they do not disrupt learning.

31. Teachers know their subjects well. They are able to respond confidently and effectively to pupils' questions. In music, for example, the teacher was able to demonstrate keyboard skills so that pupils' performance was enhanced and, in science and design and technology, specialist areas within the subjects were confidently taught.
32. Lessons are carefully and effectively planned so that teachers and pupils are clear about what work is to be tackled and what learning will result. This careful planning ensured that time was well used and the pace of lessons seen was usually good. Resources are of good quality and well-used; for example, in information and communication technology a computer-linked projector was used to project the computer screen display so that pupils could follow the teacher's explanation. Similarly good equipment, well used because of effective planning, featured in science. Pupils in physical education following a GCSE course were provided with a detailed and informative workbook which will become a useful revision document. Where technician and learning support staff are available, they are generally used well, and the latter are effective in helping pupils with special educational needs to progress. Teachers' lesson planning does not always, however, pay due regard to all aspects of a subject or the needs of all pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes lower than they should be. A relatively limited range of classroom activities and shortcomings in teachers' assessment practice are, in part, responsible.
33. Teachers generally use effective methods in the classroom. Many lessons feature clear and organised introductions and explanations by teachers, which are leaving pupils with a strong understanding of what is required. However, the range of teaching methods is relatively limited. Whole-class activities do not always sufficiently challenge all pupils in classes which contain a wide range of ability. As a result, teaching often ensures orderly classrooms and pupils make satisfactory progress but, in a range of subject areas, it fails to fully extend and challenge all pupils. Lessons observed during the inspection contained relatively little opportunity for discussion, structured group work and independent learning. There are opportunities for independent learning in some subjects, such as science, religious education, history and English, particularly at Key Stage 3, but overall, opportunities are still limited. In the best lessons, a wider range of activities was seen and pupils were actively involved in their learning - through debate and role play on powerful contemporary issues and religious celebrations in religious education, for example, and through class discussions in science and in responding to challenging questioning in geography.
34. Teachers' on-going assessment is not contributing effectively to pupils' attainment and progress. Most marking conforms to the school's marking policy in grading effort and attainment and offers praise and encouragement. However, it does not identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses sufficiently for teachers to judge pupils' progress, take account of it in subsequent planning, and specifically inform pupils how to improve. This, in turn, means

that pupils are less clear than they need to be about their own learning and this has some effect on their performance in tests and examinations. However, good practice was observed in modern foreign languages, religious education, GNVQ, mathematics and design and technology, where strengths and weaknesses were indicated and points for improvement noted.

35. Generally, teachers' setting of homework is satisfactory. However, it is not sufficiently used to extend pupils' learning and there is some inconsistency in the amount set for pupils.

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

36. The school provides a curriculum which covers a broad range of experiences and includes a good variety of subjects. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are covered, as well as personal and social education (PSE) and religious education.
37. Time allocated to subjects is, on the whole, appropriate. However, the allocation of teaching time for science at Key Stage 4 is low and this is adversely affecting pupils' attainment. Shortage of time in geography and history in Key Stage 3 is causing some difficulty in effectively covering the required curriculum.
38. Between the ages of 14 and 16, pupils follow GCSE courses, in the main, with some pupils taking GNVQ or a Certificate of Achievement as alternatives. A small number of optional subjects is offered. Currently, drama is not offered at GCSE. Option choices are formed on an annual basis through a process of surveying pupils' preferences and offering the most popular subjects. This gives pupils a genuine say in what programmes of study are offered, but it builds a level of uncertainty into teachers' planning, particularly in areas like music, history, geography and physical education. It results in significant variations year on year in the size and gender balance of groups. The current Year 11 GNVQ Leisure and Tourism provision will not feature next year and there are too few opportunities for pupils to follow a work-related curriculum. This is inconsistent with the school's Mission Statement which aims at preparing pupils for adult life. Pupils are provided with one week's work experience in Year 10.
39. Tutorial and PSE lessons are included in the time-tabled curriculum in both key stages. The content of the PSE course is appropriately structured, and is complemented by lessons in science and religious education for the teaching of sex education. Though no lessons were available for observation during the inspection week, pupils' PSE work indicates that issues are not always tackled in sufficient depth: Year 7 work on bullying, for example, is largely limited to listing types of people likely to be bullied. The extent to which the PSE curriculum is reinforced in tutorial lessons entirely depends on the decisions of individual tutors and, as a result, the provision is too inconsistent in quality.
40. Careers education and guidance are provided within the PSE programme. The Careers Service and the local Learning and Skills Council provide good support. Responsibility for careers education and guidance overall rests with a member of staff who does not teach on

the PSE programme, and there is insufficient linkage between the work of the careers education coordinator and the elements within PSE for careers education and guidance. All Year 11 pupils are interviewed and given advice and information about career options after the age of 16. As part of this process, action points are agreed and targets set. Targets are often about pupils' improvement in particular subjects but these are not copied to the pupil or those staff who could support the pupil, such as tutors, subject teachers and mentors. Opportunities are thus missed for significant gains in learning and for raising pupils' expectations of the standards they could attain.

41. Curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, with all pupils having access to the full curriculum. Pupils' needs are sometimes met by taking them out of classes for personal tuition and sometimes by providing support in lessons. Since the last inspection, the school has created a special room for pupils with special educational needs which provides a quiet facility for individual and small group tuition. For pupils over the age of 14, the Pupil Inclusion Programmes (PIPs) offer out-of-school placements for a small number of pupils who might otherwise be in danger of exclusion. The impact of the individual tuition and out-of-school placements of pupils on the continuity of their learning, however, is not always effectively monitored.
42. Extra-curricular provision is very good and a strength of the school, with summer school activity, homework clubs, revision classes and a full range of sport, music, religious, charitable, recreational and cultural activities. Fieldwork is planned into geography for every year group and in history there are visits to Hadrian's Wall, Ironbridge, a workhouse and an armoury. This extensive programme makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Additional extra-curricular support is given to gifted and talented pupils under the Excellence in Cities initiative, focusing on a second modern foreign language, mathematics for high attaining pupils and drama. Catering for the needs of gifted and talented pupils within subjects across the curriculum has yet to take place. The school intends this to happen but currently it is part of the difficulty teachers are having meeting the needs of the full range of ability within their classes.
43. St Peter's has good links with its three primary schools, which enable parents and pupils to make informed decisions about their choice of school and pupils to make a smooth start to their secondary education. There is a good induction programme with the headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and head of Year 7 involved in liaison. Pupils from non-catholic schools are effectively integrated into the induction process and the head of year visits these schools to talk to pupils opting for the school. Curriculum links are developing, with some bridging project work about to be undertaken in conjunction with the linked secondary and primary schools.
44. The personal development of pupils is very good. The school promotes moral principles within a spiritual framework, both underpinned by the excellent teaching in religious education, high standards of collective worship and frequent opportunities for pupils and staff to worship and reflect on issues of faith and morality. There were many examples of this during the inspection: voluntary lunchtime prayers in the chapel provided a moving interlude attended by pupils across the age range; assemblies were well conducted and attentively followed by pupils – cumulatively, these experiences have a significant impact on

the ethos of the school. Staff briefings begin with a prayer. The chapel is central to the life of the school, being used as a place for meditation, prayer, communal celebration and social activities. While poor behaviour is not tolerated, the school's response is not simply to impose sanctions but to offer support and strategies to avoid repetition of poor behaviour. This sensitive approach contributes to the positive and caring learning environment the school provides.

45. Pupils' social and cultural development are good. Both are well supported through the general life of the school and by extra-curricular provision. For example: assemblies are used to celebrate pupils' success in their work, effort and attendance; older pupils assist with choir practice; some pupils take on extra duties; lessons such as physical education actively promote team work and co-operation and pupils' work on their Records of Achievement encourages them to reflect on their own strengths, weaknesses and achievements. The work of the chaplaincy through the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Youth Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) (visiting care homes) and mid-day prayers are a strong influence. Opportunities for cultural development occur across the curriculum, particularly in English, the humanities, music, and modern foreign languages. There is, though, relatively little emphasis on the multi-ethnic aspects of cultural education.

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

46. The overall provision for supporting pupils' educational development is good. It is based upon a pastoral system led by a deputy headteacher supported by heads of year. These members of staff have a strong role in promoting the personal and academic standards which the school expects and facilitating support for those who need additional help. This means that pupils are well known and have adults they can readily turn to. Pupils and parents respond well to this supportive, secure environment.
47. Form tutors also have a major pastoral role although this is not sufficiently organised to make the most effective use of the time which they spend with their tutor group. There is no organised programme for the fortnightly tutor periods and practice is varied. Generally, tutors concentrate on checking homework diaries, monitoring the rewards and sanctions that pupils receive, and covering some aspects of personal and social education, as they see fit. Although form tutors meet their pupils twice each day for registration and deliver an extended tutorial period once a fortnight, pupils often choose to go to the head of year for advice and support.
48. The programme of PSE is taught by specialist staff once a fortnight. The system aims to ensure that any sensitive issues are led by staff whom pupils know well. The school has a useful draft policy for PSE but this does not yet include a detailed scheme of work, training for staff or clear roles for all those involved in pastoral work. The pastoral team meets with other key staff and support workers to discuss issues of pupils' attendance, welfare and guidance. This time is very well spent and makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the school's pastoral system by providing a structured, regular focus on general matters and the specific support which individual pupils require.

49. Good systems are in place to monitor and improve attendance. Registers are taken regularly in classes and well maintained. However, not all teachers are sufficiently reinforcing the need for punctuality. Pupils receive awards as individuals, for instance, for excellent or significantly improved attendance and within form groups for achieving the highest rate within the upper or lower school. Associated administrative and support procedures are good. These features are helping to improve the level of attendance which has risen steadily over the last few years, although it is still below the national average for secondary schools.
50. Provision for the tracking and recording of pupils' personal and academic development is good overall. Each pupil receives a full and two interim reports each year that contain attainment levels, attendance and punctuality records. Pupils are invited to outline their views of their own strengths and weaknesses along with ideas on how they can improve. However, teachers' judgements of pupils' academic progress are limited by deficiencies in day-to-day marking and assessment. Some marking provides pupils with constructive comments and suggestions which helps them to direct their future efforts. However, marking is often merely a series of ticks and in consequence, assessment is not sufficiently used by teachers in their planning, particularly in the short term. It is not consistently used to identify areas in which individual pupils can make progress. This is having an adverse effect on the standards pupils achieve.
51. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are well integrated and are frequently amongst the most able and motivated. Of the twelve pupils registered at the time of the inspection, four were identified for attendance at the gifted and talented drama class and one Bengali girl who arrived with very little English was also in the Year 10 German class for the gifted and talented. A Sri Lankan refugee for whom the local education authority provided a short induction programme was well taught by a peripatetic teacher in an interactive and focused lesson well planned to meet her specific needs. The school has purchased teaching time to help her to integrate more successfully. This is achieving its aims: during an English lesson, following a demonstration with live snakes, she was observed for the first time to speak without prompting. In her most confident utterance to date, she related a brief anecdote about coming across one of the species shown, in the jungle near Jaffna.
52. Procedures to ensure the safety of pupils are good and the school provides a safe environment overall. Regular risk assessments are carried out and the school has plans to remedy during the current academic year the one outstanding health and safety issue about the extraction of dust in the design and technology department.
53. Child protection procedures are in place and, although there has been little formal training, adults are aware of the necessary action to take should they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. There is a trained first aider with responsibility for responding to injuries and illness. Accident books are suitably maintained and first aid boxes are strategically placed around school.
54. The school has a good, effective range of rewards and sanctions to improve behaviour. A system of achievement credits and headteacher's merits encourages pupils of all abilities to meet the standards of conduct which the school expects. If necessary, pupils are set targets

for improving their behaviour which are assessed lesson by lesson. Form tutors and heads of year monitor the behaviour of individual pupils. The school has set up a system of support specifically to promote good standards of behaviour from pupils who have difficulty in coping with the demands of normal lessons on a full-time basis. This provides pupils with access to good quality advice and constructive support that often avoids the necessity of a short exclusion from school. In turn, this system benefits the majority of pupils in teaching groups by enabling them to work without disruption. Pupils know who to turn to for help.

55. Arrangements for the supervising of pupils entering and leaving the school and during breaks are very good. The school has established common rooms which allow pupils access to indoor facilities with activities that they help to organise. In addition there is a well-maintained garden, with seats, which is well used by pupils as well as access to secure outdoor areas. This aspect of provision extends to opening the dining hall before morning school for pupils to purchase hot and cold meals and play table tennis, football, read or listen to music. The trust which is placed in pupils and the recognition of their need for good quality leisure opportunities make a very valuable contribution to their personal development.

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

56. The school has very good links with parents. Parents are positive about the work of the school and the education it provides for their children. The opinion of the great majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire and at the inspectors' meeting for parents is that the school works closely with them and responds appropriately to any concerns raised. In particular, parents are satisfied that they receive lots of information both general and specific to their child. Findings from the inspection support these views of parents.
57. The school values parents' contributions and a range of procedures are in place for actively involving parents as partners in support of their children's academic and personal development. This partnership begins with visits to primary schools and parishes by the headteacher and the head of Year 7 who introduce the school to prospective parents. Parents and prospective pupils then visit the school in preparation for the transfer from primary education.
58. The school has recently consulted the Parent Teacher Association on the formation of a home-school agreement and about homework. The school contacts parents, often requesting a discussion if difficulties occur, for example, with a pupil's behaviour, attendance, punctuality or learning needs. Parents are usually supportive when they realise what is needed to help their child. The school welcomes visits initiated by parents for information or advice and parents overall find that the school is approachable and that any concerns are dealt with speedily and with discretion.
59. Information provided for parents is good overall. The school prospectus is clearly set out and provides a range of useful information on administrative procedures and what is taught. Additional information about school events and up-to-date results of public tests and examinations is provided each year. Parents are generally happy with the information they

receive on their children's progress. Interim reports, provided twice a year, give a good range of information on pupils' achievements and are specific to individuals. Annual written reports include comments from the headteacher as well as pupils' views on how well they have done and what they want to improve. However, these reports are not effectively used to show what actual progress pupils have made and how they can improve further. In addition to written information, parents are invited to meet staff to discuss any aspect of their child's school life at least once a year. These meetings are well attended. A homework diary informs parents about what is required and this is signed by form tutors and parents.

60. The school welcomes the support of parents in all aspects of its work. A few parents usefully work in school supporting individual pupils with reading and helping with sports coaching. The Parent Teacher Association makes a significant contribution to the quality of school life by arranging social events and raising extra funds for resources. Such events, as well as school ceremonies and concerts, are very well supported by parents. Sixty parents attended the meeting arranged for them before the inspection took place.
61. The school has maintained the high quality partnership reported at the previous inspection.

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

62. Although the headteacher has only been in post three years and the current leadership team in place since September 2000, the school is very well led and well managed. This is having a significant impact on the progress of the school, clearly demonstrated by the improvement in examination results and by the school's growing reputation in the community.
63. The headteacher is providing very strong and energetic leadership. He has a very clear idea of where the school should be going. This vision – of raising educational standards and of preparing pupils for life in the wider community, in the context of the Catholic faith – was strongly expressed during the inspection by the headteacher and governors alike. It is providing a clear sense of direction for the school.
64. The aspirations of the school's leaders are conveyed through a Mission Statement and, although it is not supported by an explicit list of school aims, the aspirations are well known to staff, pupils and parents. The headteacher has succeeded in securing the commitment of the leadership team and the staff so that the school is driven by a shared sense of purpose and positive attitudes amongst the staff and pupils. The improving standards, the quality of pupils' behaviour, the caring attitudes and good relationships, along with the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, all attest to the school's progress in its striving for high standards within a community based on Christian values.
65. The headteacher is successfully managing change. This is demonstrated by the staff's shared sense of purpose and direction, by their positive attitudes toward improvement, and by their strong team spirit. Non-teaching staff feel very much a part of the school community. The headteacher, in his commitment, management style and attitudes to pupils and staff, is clearly leading by example to realise the school's aims and values. However, he is shouldering extensive responsibility and there is scope for more delegation.

66. Evidence from the inspection confirmed the judgement from the local education authority's Extended Performance Review of January 2001, that overall, the school is well managed. Planning is influenced by forward thinking: a Performance Management Policy is in place with objectives identified for teachers; routine management and organisation are good; and there are strong financial controls by the headteacher and governors. The headteacher is now being effectively supported by a leadership team comprising two deputy headteachers and a senior teacher. This support has, for example, contributed significantly to the effectiveness of the school's Beacon Initiative. The leadership team formally oversees the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, there is no formal link with other subjects. This places very heavy responsibility on one-person departments where the teachers responsible have no colleagues with whom to discuss and consult, particularly as some are having difficulties with planning further developments and with systematically evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
67. The planning of further developments has clearly improved since the last inspection. Planning now focuses on the crucial elements of standards, teaching, behaviour and attendance. The planning process identifies responsible staff, timescales, outcomes, success criteria and costings. However, despite pupils' low standards of literacy being identified in the last inspection report, and clear evidence of continuing low standards, literacy is not cited as a major priority for development.
68. Despite its strengths, the current school improvement plan is not a fully effective mechanism for guiding improvement. There is an under-lying confusion between 'targets' and 'actions' and each broad priority is accompanied by a high number of actions. As a result, targets for achieving priorities are not sharply focused and do not have individual plans for action which can be rigorously checked to determine the extent of improvement. The evidence from this inspection confirms the judgement of the local education authority's extended performance review that the school improvement plan is mainly a list of tasks to be tackled. The large number of intended actions, not linked to specific targets, reduces the precision and rigour of prioritising and makes it very difficult to measure improvement. As a result of these deficiencies in the school's framework for planning, individual departments' plans for further improvement are not effectively linked to the overall school improvement plan.
69. As part of its aspirations for improvement, the leadership team has spent a residential weekend discussing aspects of the school's performance, including its GCSE results, and in reviewing the quality of teaching and staff training. A professional day each year is devoted to school review. The local education authority has been called in to evaluate departments of the school, for example, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and special educational needs. Through these and other processes, the headteacher has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the school does not have systematic procedures to check how effectively its policies are implemented. For example, the assessment policy is not being successfully carried out by staff and, as a result, teachers' marking is not contributing sufficiently to improve pupils' standards and progress.
70. Monitoring the quality of teaching in the school has improved since the school was last

inspected. A programme of classroom observation has been introduced which requires each teacher to be observed teaching by other staff for more than the annual minimum required by Performance Management regulations. The process is largely in place and there is some indication that it is contributing positively to the quality of teaching. However, shortage of available time is making it difficult for the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to monitor the teaching of pupils with special educational needs.

71. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that the process of monitoring teaching needs improvement. At present, it is not systematically co-ordinated and it does not include observation of the teaching in the weekly tutorial period. The information gathered from lesson observations is not being efficiently used to determine priorities for improving teaching and learning across the whole school and setting up a corresponding training programme for teachers. Consequently, the school is not yet deriving the full benefit from its programme of classroom observation.
72. Middle managers are generally providing good leadership. However, development planning and monitoring in subject departments, including the special educational needs department, reflect the weaknesses identified in the whole-school procedures. In addition, the planning of the teaching programme is weak in music. Physical education, where there is no designated head of department, lacks effective coordination.
73. The school is gathering data about pupils' performance in tests and examinations. Overall results and trends are discussed in an annual meeting of the whole staff; and individual pupils' results are recorded and reviewed during their time in school. This data is not, however, being used systematically enough to give a clear picture of pupils' performance from Year 7 to Year 11, or to rigorously analyse the achievements of pupils by gender, ethnicity or ability. Middle managers are not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of performance data. For example, they do not receive information about pupils' average points scores in individual subjects, compared with the school's and the national averages, so that they can judge their departments' performances.
74. The governing body is effectively carrying out its statutory responsibilities and it is contributing well to the leadership and management of the school. For example, through its sub-committees it identified the need to improve pupils' skills in information and communication technology and, in consequence, approved a substantial investment in information and communication technology equipment. This has contributed significantly to improved examination results. Governors play a useful part in setting the direction of the school through their participation in the school's development planning. The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and the leadership team.
75. Governors do not simply rubber-stamp the school's policies and practices but collectively do function as a 'critical friend' to the school; for example, they have persuaded the headteacher that the post of a Learning Mentor should be filled by someone with counselling skills rather than by an ex-teacher. The governing body, through its effective committee structure and through the knowledge and experience of its members, has the means to hold the school to account. It is not yet being fully effective in carrying out this responsibility.

Governors are not yet in a position to effectively monitor the school's performance, however. They lack focused information from an evaluation of the progress of the school's policies and practices.

76. Financial control is efficient. The budget is no longer in deficit and spending is effectively monitored. Complete financial records are kept and the school's funding is very well used for its intended purposes. The governors have successfully addressed the issue of linking finance with the school's priorities which was identified in the last inspection report, and the school improvement plan is now costed. However, the efficiency of this is adversely affected by the deficiencies in prioritising and target-setting.
77. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and effectively deployed. Teaching groups are smaller than average. However, national recommendations for newly qualified teachers are not being fully carried out. For example, one has been given a full timetable and is teaching all lower ability groups. Support staff are well deployed and make a major contribution to the life and work of the school. Lunchtime supervisors and catering staff are thoroughly effective and relate well to pupils. Office staff, technicians and others are courteous, helpful and efficient. Flexibility and a willingness to do more than is strictly required of them is characteristic of support staff across the school; as an extreme but not isolated example, a classroom technician assists with lunchtime supervision, supports pupils with special educational needs in lessons, acts as a general handy-person around the school, has helped with extra-curricular activities and is a school governor.
78. The school clearly supports its staff and their development but the training programme for staff is not systematically based on a careful evaluation of the school's current needs. Consequently, the conscientious training programme is not having sufficient impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
79. The school provides an effective and pleasant learning environment. Good displays around the school celebrate pupils' achievements in lessons and in extra-curricular events and activities. Teaching accommodation is good, with spacious rooms in most areas, in good decorative order. However, there are no drama facilities or separate careers library. There is still no medical room, a lack pointed out in the last inspection report, although a room next to the reception office is used when pupils feel unwell. The library itself is a pleasant and well-organised area with computer access although its use as a teaching area does restrict pupils' use and contributes to the lack of independence in pupils' learning skills.
80. Generally resources for learning are good and are effectively used to enhance learning. Recent investment in information and communication technology has resulted in a good ratio of computers to pupils, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' standards. In almost all subject areas there are sufficient resources. In science, for example, equipment is of a good standard and is well used. Its quality, combined with effective lesson planning, assists and reinforces learning. Only in music is a lack of resources, including poor provision for information and communication technology, having an adverse impact on learning. In design and technology and in art and design, a shortage of resources is preventing pupils from having the full range of experiences intended by the National Curriculum.

81. The library is large and light with a spacious working area and a number of computers. The fiction stock is generous, appropriate to the needs and interests of the pupils, and in good condition. The reference section is well stocked and reasonably up to date. English, science and geography stock is sufficient to meet the needs of the curriculum but the library is poorly stocked for mathematics. Under half the school population uses the library regularly, but most pupils in Key Stage 3 are members of the local library, and are more active users and borrowers of the school library than older pupils. During lesson times, individual pupils use the library for research.
82. The school applies well the principles of Best Value. It is comparing its test and examination results with other schools. It also compares its costings with other schools, using the local Resource Management Unit. It is investigating possible savings and increased efficiency through looking at services from other providers. The school takes the views of staff and parents into account when decisions are pending; for example, the Parent Teacher Association was consulted over the designing and refurbishing of the school's dining area. However, more could be done to consult pupils. There is a School's Council but it is so long since it met that pupils are unclear if it still exists.
83. The school is an effective and improving one. There has been clear success in raising standards and pupils are achieving well compared to their prior attainment. Teaching is good; the school is well managed and its leadership is very good; the personal development of pupils is very good, they behave well and their attendance is improving. Despite its high unit costs, the school continues to provide satisfactory value for money.
84. The findings from the inspection confirm that parents' high opinion of the school's leadership and management is fully justified.

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

85. The school governors, in conjunction with the headteacher and staff, should take the following actions to raise standards by:

##### **Improving the contribution of assessment to pupils' attainment and progress by:**

- \* ensuring that teachers' marking identifies pupils' specific achievements and what is needed for improvement, so that pupils receive effective feedback, and judgements about their progress are based firmly on their prior attainment and needs;
- \* enabling teachers to develop strategies for organising marking so that it is both effective and manageable.

[32, 34, 50, 59, 69, 99, 118, 133, 139, 141, 153, 162, 184, 187, 200, 231]

##### **Improving the extent to which teaching meets the learning needs of pupils across the range of ability within classes by:**

- \* ensuring that tasks set commonly for the whole class have the scope to challenge the full range of ability;

- \* ensuring that teachers' intervention and support is effectively targeted at those pupils who are in need of it;
- \* ensuring that specific information from assessment is used to inform teachers' subsequent planning.

[32, 33, 42, 50, 98, 129, 137, 145, 171, 175, 193, 195, 198, 201, 223, 227, 228]

**Developing pupils' literacy skills by:**

- \* setting up a whole-school working group to develop and co-ordinate literacy across the curriculum;
- \* ensuring that teachers' planning includes a focus on literacy.

[8, 17, 67, 91, 95, 104, 105, 139, 155, 158, 166, 169, 213]

### **Improving the processes for the monitoring of teaching by:**

- \* extending the process to include the weekly tutor period;
- \* building the process into the school calendar;
- \* co-ordinating the findings from the process in order to evaluate the quality of teaching and address identified weaknesses through the school's programme of staff development.

[66, 70, 71, 78, 103, 163, 220, 232]

### **Further improving the planning of development by:**

- \* ensuring that each priority for development has an action plan with sharply focused targets and clearly defined actions to achieve them;
- \* systematically monitoring the progress towards achieving the targets for each development;
- \* ensuring that planning for developments in whole-school, areas and departments is systematically linked.

[66, 68, 72, 76, 134, 141, 453, 174, 187, 202, 221, 232]

### **Other suggested areas of improvement**

- Raise the attainment of girls.  
[3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 20, 89, 90, 94, 101, 103, 124, 136]
- Further develop pupils' independent learning skills.  
[22, 33, 79, 98, 118, 129, 137, 145, 158, 171, 198, 227, 231]
- Make a more systematic and comprehensive use of data to evaluate performance.  
[73, 103, 141, 153]
- Systematically monitor whole-school policies and procedures.  
[39, 41, 69, 72, 75, 112, 122, 187, 220]

*The numbers in brackets refer to the main paragraph(s) in the full report where these issues are mentioned.*

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

86. There is now a secure system for the identification and assessment of pupils having special educational needs. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) liaises with all partner schools during Year 6 regarding pupils having special educational needs. On entry

to St. Peter's pupils are maintained on the same stage of the national code of practice as they were on during Year 6 at their primary school. Tests given when pupils enter the school are also used appropriately to identify pupils who may need additional support. Other standardised tests are also used on a regular basis within the special educational needs department to assess need, inform target setting and contribute to the monitoring of progress. A member of the special educational needs team has a responsibility for on-going assessment.

87. A redesigned and standardised pro-forma for Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) is now in use across the school and has resulted in improved target setting, although targets are not always sufficiently specific; for example, "To attend Successmaker every day" and "Improve scores in reading, spelling and mathematics." There is a useful involvement of pupils in the establishment of targets in their IEPs. The school produces a detailed handbook which provides information for all staff on pupils on the register of special educational needs and the nature of their difficulties.
  
88. Since the last inspection report, there has been an improvement in assessment practice and the interpretation of data, and this, along with the introduction of an improved IEP format, has resulted in improved targeting of pupils and planning work for them. There has also been an increase in support for pupils in Key Stage 4 – a key issue following the last inspection. Learning support for pupils aged 14 or above has increased and pupils are more closely targeted; assessment practice and the interpretation of data have improved. However, further improvements are still needed. IEPs are currently reviewed/revised twice a year, but the arrangements are not frequent or flexible enough to maximise the use of IEPs in contributing to pupils' learning and attainment. Progress is not recorded consistently on IEPs.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

112
-----

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

61
----

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	21	34	40	4	1	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*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	420	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	192	n/a

#### **Special educational needs**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	103	n/a

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	9.6
National comparative data	7.7

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	45	39	84

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	17	23	17
	Girls	19	22	16
	Total	36	45	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	43 (51)	54 (42)	39 (34)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (14)	24 (15)	14 (8)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	23	24	16
	Girls	22	20	12
	Total	45	44	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (55)	52 (46)	33 (38)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	20 (19)	24 (18)	13 (8)
	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	42	41	83

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	13	37	39
	Girls	12	33	38
	Total	25	70	77
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	30 (32)	84 (77)	93 (94)
	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.*

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	33
	National	38.4

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	1
White	406
Any other minority ethnic group	4

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	32	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### *Teachers and classes*

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	28.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	215

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.9
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	20.5
Key Stage 4	19.6

### *Financial information*

Financial year	2000/01
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	1372715
Total expenditure	1330438
Expenditure per pupil	3261
Balance brought forward from previous year	182848
Balance carried forward to next year	42277

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	418
Number of questionnaires returned	218

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35.0	60.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
My child is making good progress in school.	50.0	48.0	2.0	1.0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41.0	50.0	3.0	1.0	6.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39.0	46.0	8.0	4.0	4.0
The teaching is good.	46.0	49.0	2.0	0	3.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47.0	46.0	7.0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69.0	26.0	3.0	1.0	1.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64.0	35.0	0	1.0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37.0	56.0	5.0	0	2.0
The school is well led and managed.	52.0	43.0	1.0	0	4.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52.0	44.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37.0	50.0	6.0	0	7.0

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

### **ENGLISH**

89. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, standards in National Curriculum tests were close to the average for similar schools. However, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 was well below the national average, as it was at the time of the last inspection. It has fallen in the last two years whereas it has improved in mathematics and science. Results were also well below the national average when pupils were assessed by their teachers. Although there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in the national tests, boys are performing better than girls related to national gender averages.
90. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, in GCSE examinations the proportion of pupils gaining a higher grade A\*-C was well below the national average for English and English Literature, but was close to the average for media studies. There were few very high grades in English, but in English Literature they were close to the national average and in media studies, two students achieved A\*, the third year in which the school has achieved this exceptional grade. Compared with their average across other subjects, pupils achieve well in English Literature and media studies, but fall below their overall average in English. Girls achieved more A\*-C grades than boys in English and English Literature but when results are related to national gender averages, boys achieved better than girls in English; there was no significant difference in English Literature.
91. During the inspection, standards observed in lessons and in pupils' written work in Key Stage 3 were generally below average, but were better in reading than in writing. In Year 7, standards of writing are closer to the nationally expected standards than in Year 8; by the end of Year 9, pupils are beginning to write well in response to literature. In some classes the development of pupils' language skills is limited because of the preponderance of isolated exercises set by teachers. In all classes, work on language skills, whilst thorough, does not transfer to pupils' extended writing. Almost all pupils have a narrow repertoire of simple sentence structures and this is limiting their attainment. Vocabulary is limited, except for the most able, and there is a lack of models of writing to help pupils develop style and tone. Some boys, in the top sets in particular, are developing a lively command of a personal voice, using dialect and irony as early as in Year 7. Some pupils are able to adopt a range of styles of writing, but opportunities are too rarely provided in some classes.
92. Although test results at 14 have fallen, there has been improvement in spelling, punctuation and handwriting in Key Stage 3. Presentation is generally good, and many pupils consistently use cursive script by Year 8, maintaining well-ordered books and folders. Spelling is good throughout the key stage, and there is good use of detail in story and descriptive writing. Paragraphing is late to emerge and is insecure, even in Year 9, in the work of the bottom half of the year group. Evidence of drafting shows that the technique is regularly encouraged and pupils show understanding of how to use computers in the process.
93. Standards of speaking and listening are below average in both key stages; articulation is

often poor, and answers to teachers are almost always very brief, though pupils are keen to respond. In group work, pupils are more confident, but they are still reluctant to attempt extended contributions or to be exploratory. When pupils mature, often late in Key Stage 4, they become more fluent and self-assured orally, but lower ability Year 11 pupils have poor social skills and do not listen well to each other.

94. At Key Stage 4, standards are generally below average, but those of middle ability pupils in Year 10, some of whom have made very good progress this year, are more secure than those in Year 11, though the standards of higher ability pupils are comparable. Lower middle ability students produce good folders of work in both year groups; assignments are structured carefully and reveal sound understanding of appropriate literature, some of it quite challenging, and presentation is good, often using information and communication technology effectively. Pupils in the lowest groups achieve very low standards, often failing to complete the course. Pupils with English as a foreign language (EAL) achieve as well as others; currently four are in the drama class for gifted and talented pupils. Spelling is generally good. More able students write in detail and at length, revealing very secure knowledge of texts, and the ability to use evidence to good effect. However, sentence structures lack variety. There is evidence of some under-achievement at this key stage, particularly amongst girls in lower middle ability groups. Frequent and prolonged absences, particularly in Year 11 still impede progress for a number of pupils.
95. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and it was good or better in two-thirds of lessons seen. Teachers' knowledge about English language and literature is a strength of the department. However, teachers have only limited knowledge of teaching and learning styles and the techniques promoted by the National Literacy Strategy. Lessons are well planned, teachers identify appropriate aims and tasks and their expectations of pupils are generally high.
96. Teachers work hard to help their pupils to achieve, and they are extremely effective at supporting pupils who lack self-confidence as learners through a study of literature and in producing GCSE coursework. There is a significant difference between the quality of work pupils are able to produce in the relaxed context of the classroom and under formal examination conditions.
97. Teachers effectively manage pupils with good humour and a persistent focus on learning. Many pupils who might otherwise abandon education are encouraged to enjoy English. Teachers motivate pupils to attempt challenging texts and to explore their emotions and responses. This results in some very moving poetry writing, such as the work on 'using the eye as a camera' on display in the corridor. The learning environment created by the teachers is attractive and celebrates pupils' achievements, setting high expectations for all in a wide range of styles. Support staff contribute well to pupils' progress.
98. There are weaknesses in teaching. Teachers' lesson planning often does not identify exactly what pupils are expected to learn. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to tackle active, open-ended, independent work such as is familiar to media studies' pupils. The teaching of the pupils in the lowest ability sets does not provide intellectual stimulus or a rich

diet of learning activities.

99. Assessment is a weakness and marking is very varied. Some teachers adopt a successful technique whereby they comment as a reader, identify effective attributes to praise and encourage, as well as aspects which need to be developed, with advice to pupils as to how they could improve. Others write 'Good' on every piece, and do not indicate pupils' achievements and what is needed to improve. To improve standards, there has to be a much more focused and consistent analysis of pupils' attainment. Currently, teachers are not effectively identifying the elements of language development that pupils need to learn. The scripts of problematic pupils in Year 7 and Year 10 are not scrutinised sufficiently to determine precisely what it is that pupils need to be taught.
100. Homework is set regularly and results, at Key Stage 4, in assignments generally being completed.
101. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Although the pattern of GCSE results is erratic, the trend in results is slowly upwards. The proportion of pupils entered for, and successful in, GCSE English Literature has increased significantly since the last inspection, and boys' results in English have improved. Technical skills, especially spelling and presentation, have improved. Pupils with EAL are achieving well. Teaching has improved, with clear objectives in most lessons and work appropriately targeted. Classes are generally well managed. Lower attaining pupils, especially those in bottom sets, still lack self-assurance and girls across the range, especially in Key Stage 4, do not achieve their potential.
102. Leadership of the department is energetic and committed and the team works extremely hard to ensure consistency and high levels of pupils' engagement. The learning environment is stimulating, challenging and attractive and resources are well maintained. The initiatives to broaden pupils' experiences and create relevant challenges, such as the media studies course and the extra-curricular activities, are intelligently chosen and implemented with vigour.
103. The unavoidable absence of the head of department for several months has contributed to the lack of effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. It is insufficiently formalised and regular. The underachievement of girls has not been seriously addressed. The management skills of more refined data analysis, assessment and development planning need to be improved.
104. The school is behind schedule in its involvement in the Key Stage 3 phase of the National Literacy Strategy. For example, the use of writing frames has yet to be introduced. In history, music and mathematics, there are some recent displays incorporating key words, but little evidence of their use in lessons. Standards of reading and writing observed in lessons across the school are below average and, in subjects where there are high literacy demands, pupils' achievement is being restricted by these low levels of competence, as it was at the time of the last inspection. In all subjects, there is a lack of extended writing and pupils have difficulty expressing ideas clearly and accurately. Many pupils of both genders lack confidence when speaking, and are unable to make extended contributions to questions. In

mathematics, for example, pupils are rarely able to explain how they worked something out. Throughout the school and ability range, however, spelling, punctuation and presentation are satisfactory, especially when pupils use computers. In physical education, there was a good example of effective note taking, and in English, pupils are given the opportunity to tackle a wide range of types of writing.

105. Given pupils' low standards of literacy, the adoption of a whole-school approach to literacy led by senior management is a matter of extreme urgency.

## **MATHEMATICS**

106. Standards achieved by 14 year old pupils in National Curriculum tests in 2000 are well above the average for similar schools. However, they are below the national average. 52 percent of pupils attained Level 5 and above compared to 65 percent nationally. This is a significant improvement from 38.3 percent in 1997. Standards are now higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Targets set by the school indicate that this trend should continue with expected results of 67 percent by 2002. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
107. GCSE results in 2000 were well below the national average for grades A\*-C. There have only been isolated examples of pupils attaining the higher grades; one grade A in 1997 and two in 1999. In terms of grades A\* - G the school achieved 94.5 percent, which compares well with the national figure. Overall, pupils' attainment in mathematics is lower than their average across other subjects. Nevertheless, results have improved gradually from 1997, and they were better than at the time of the last inspection. Until this year girls have performed less well than boys. The proportion of pupils entered for GCSE is below the national figure but the school intends to address this next year.
108. Attainment in lessons observed during the inspection was higher than that suggested by recent test and examination results. It was close to the standards expected nationally. The standard of work observed in lessons for the top ability groups in Years 8 and 9 was above what is typically found nationally. It was at an appropriate level for the middle ability pupils in Key Stage 3. This is partly due to the improved attainment on entry, but more especially to effective specialist teaching.
109. High attaining pupils in Year 9 show good understanding of the equation of a straight line and can solve simultaneous equations graphically and algebraically. They are conversant with the correct terminology. Lower attaining pupils concentrate more on basic computational skills and although they work confidently with whole numbers, using the four rules and can approximate to multiples of ten, their understanding of negative numbers is less secure. Opportunities to work with shape and space and data handling have increased. They were more apparent in classroom observations than in scrutiny of pupils' past work.
110. In Year 11, only two pupils (both boys) are currently entered for the higher tier at GCSE. These pupils use trigonometric ratios easily, expand brackets and solve quadratic equations and use the sine and cosine rule in non-right angled triangles. Other pupils are working

below levels that might typically be expected for their age. They complete extended tasks, using symbols and diagrams to describe results, and break tasks down, but it is difficult to assess how much guidance is given. Attendance is poor in other than the top ability group in Year 10 and Year 11; this inhibits progress and depresses examination results. Attendance in Years 7, 8 and 9 is better.

111. As part of a Beacon School Initiative St Peter's is working with two other schools to support pupils in increasing potential D Grades to C at GCSE by providing additional classes after school. One session observed effectively concentrated on examination techniques, stressing the need to show working out and read questions carefully. Pupils are making sound progress.
112. Pupils generally are making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in class, but sometimes become over dependent on this. They have access to all aspects of National Curriculum mathematics. Occasionally they are encouraged to look back over previous work and help themselves. The use of the individualised computer program is insufficiently monitored to ensure pupils understand where they have made mistakes and how they can improve.
113. A numeracy policy has been in existence for some years and includes a curriculum map identifying areas of support for mathematics in other subject areas. There were a limited number of examples of use of this policy during the inspection; accurate measuring in design and technology, completion of spreadsheets in information and communication technology and competency in mental arithmetic in geography; but no evidence of systematic acknowledgement within other subjects' schemes of work for lesson planning. This policy is in need of review and of rigorous monitoring to judge its effectiveness.
114. The quality of mathematics teaching is good. It shows marked improvement since the last inspection. There is a high level of subject expertise and teachers are able to motivate pupils using probing questions to challenge understanding, as with Year 9 solving simultaneous equations, and through organising a range of practical activities, as with Year 7 pupils so that they can classify properties of triangles.
115. Lessons were structured well on many occasions to inform pupils what they were expected to learn and to review performance at the end of the session. Sharing with pupils the lesson objectives identified in the planning, and referring back to these, was not always incorporated into lessons and there were, therefore, missed opportunities to involve pupils in self-assessment. The use of a target board to review understanding of angles with Year 7 pupils ensured a lively start to a lesson, and continued strategies used in primary schools.
116. Management of pupils is good, ensuring good behaviour which allows all pupils to concentrate on the task in hand. In classes where a significant minority of pupils have behaviour problems the support assistant was well briefed and understood her role. Praise was used effectively to encourage these pupils and realistic targets were set. Expectations that pupils would complete tasks were high and pupils responded positively to this. Help to individuals was often effective in encouraging them to rethink their original ideas and

persevere.

117. In the more effective lessons a range of strategies were used, for example, exploring links between angle measurement and data handling with Year 9 pupils, or using a range of oral and practical activities when revising negative numbers with lower ability pupils in preparation for national tests. Teaching was less effective when pupils spent a long time doing repeated examples, or when the activity did not match the learning objective, for example, when a lesson on symmetry became a drawing activity.
118. There were isolated examples of pupils supporting each other; a Year 8 girl patiently explained to another pupil how to find points on a fractional graph but there were too few planned opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or small groups and develop as independent learners. Too few pupils arrive at lessons with even basic equipment of pens, pencils and rulers. Marking was mostly up to date but was inconsistent. There were very good examples of comments in books which begin: “in order to make progress you should...” but these examples were not practised by all teachers.
119. Homework is regularly set but not always recorded by pupils in diaries. The quality of homework is variable but often extends pupils’ work in class.
120. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. A new head of department and two new members of staff have been appointed. There is now a team of well-qualified teachers committed to raising standards who have created a motivating learning environment, both in the classrooms and in the surrounding area. A scheme of work provides continuity across and within the key stages. References to a range of computer software are now included, and there is increased and effective use of this by teachers. Information from primary schools is used quite successfully to predict grades at the end of Year 9. There is a comprehensive departmental handbook, linked closely to whole school policies. Planning of further developments is improving, although evaluation of the process is less secure. The plan has clear links with the school’s improvement plan as mathematics has been a whole-school priority.
121. The department receives a generous allocation of money which has been used wisely to extend the range of text books and resources for information and communication technology. There is room for improvement in the quality of resource books available in the library, in the number of mathematical dictionaries in school, and in the range of resources available for practical activities.
122. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department sets high standards of herself, her staff and the pupils and a clear work ethic is evident in all classrooms. Lesson observations take place regularly, are well documented and clear feedback is given to the observed teacher. Monitoring of other aspects of the department’s work is not yet sufficiently formalised to identify and take action on particular strengths and weaknesses or inconsistencies, for example, marking.
123. Much has already been achieved in raising attainment of more able pupils through the Excellence in Cities programme, and the department staff give freely of their time to provide extra-curricular classes in all year groups. Support for lower attaining pupils has been

provided at successful summer schools, and continued with the use of 'Springboard 7' materials.

## SCIENCE

124. Attainment of 14 year olds in National Curriculum tests in 2000 was above the average for similar schools. However, results were well below the national average. Having fallen from 1997 – 99 they improved in 2000 and are now similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Boys performed slightly better than girls. In 2000, the percentages of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in GCSE were below national averages for both boys and girls. Boys' results were better than girls'. Overall, pupils' results were lower than their averages across their other subjects. Since the previous inspection, standards have remained fairly constant.
125. Standards of work observed during the inspection, both in lessons and from a scrutiny of pupils' work, were higher than test and examination results indicate. Latest results of national tests taken at age 11 indicate that pupils were achieving broadly in line with national averages and this was reflected in lessons observed with younger pupils. In Key Stage 3, pupils showed good practical skills. They had a clear understanding of practical procedures and the reasons for performing them. They could explain the role of predictions, fair testing, the need for control and the difference between theory and fact. The work done by more able pupils was challenging and they were able to demonstrate a knowledge of work above the levels typically expected, such as why the nucleus is the first part of the cell to start dividing, and the circumstances in which cell division does not produce exact copies. This level of challenge was not seen in all lessons at Key Stage 3 and in some cases younger pupils were repeating work already done in their primary schools. The needs of the most able pupils were addressed by additional lunchtime and after school sessions. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported. This contrasted favourably with the previous inspection where there was no support for pupils with special educational needs. Throughout both key stages these pupils showed pride in their written work.
126. At Key Stage 4, pupils showed sound practical skills, working methodically and carefully. Lower ability pupils were less good at recording and writing their experimental work. Pupils would readily answer questions in class and felt secure and confident enough to raise further questions themselves. A wide range of ability was evident in the lower ability groups. For example, one group was investigating the law of moments. Whilst most were able to balance the beam by placing loads strategically, only a few could see any rule emerging. One pupil understood the concept and took great pleasure in explaining it to her peers.
127. The time allowed for GCSE science is below that recommended and this is limiting pupils' opportunities to engage in practical investigations.
128. The quality of teaching is good. In all lessons observed it was at least satisfactory; and it was good or better in 86 percent of lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers show good subject knowledge and their explanations were clearly presented. There were good examples of short, sharp demonstrations to engage pupils at

the start of lessons. There were good examples of effective use of questioning both to draw out knowledge from earlier work and to promote further thought. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Regular changes of activity were effective in keeping pupils on task, as were lessons where pupil seating was rearranged to facilitate better learning conditions.

129. The range and variety of teaching approaches observed were limited. In general, there was only limited opportunity for pupils to spend time graph plotting, interpreting and analysing data. There were too few opportunities for pupil-centred activities. Opportunities to encourage pupils to read in class were missed and opportunities for discussion or debate were overlooked. In some lessons, work was not sufficiently challenging for all pupils and in others there were unsuccessful attempts to provide a range of materials to meet the needs of all pupils. Nevertheless most pupils showed powers of sustained concentration and application throughout the lessons with a very good attitude in the laboratories. Their behaviour was good, and they were co-operative and courteous both with each other and with staff.
130. Teachers demonstrated good management and organisation in the laboratories. They all emphasised the need for safe working and addressed the relevant safety issues. The control of pupils' behaviour was good and there were very few cases where pupils were being inattentive. There was clear evidence of well-planned lessons, and this was reflected in pupils' good response and progress. In particular, there were some well-planned and managed practical activities and the provision of equipment and materials was meticulously and efficiently performed by the two laboratory technicians.
131. Some lessons lacked pace. In many cases, learning objectives were implicit rather than being clearly identified and shared with the pupils at the start of lessons. Similarly, not all lessons had a sufficiently effective summary or review at the end to enable teachers to identify the pupils' progress.
132. The use of information and communication technology by pupils and staff at present is underdeveloped although there were some good examples seen. For example, a low ability group of Year 7 pupils showed good information and communication technology skills in accessing an electronic encyclopaedia of science to gather information, which they were able to feed into a spreadsheet template. Opportunities for data logging by the pupils are limited and pupils have no opportunity to access information from the Internet within science lessons.
133. All pupils' work is marked regularly with most teachers giving comments on the quality of the work; but there is little evidence that teachers effectively identify pupils' achievements and tell them what they need to do to improve.
134. There is a newly appointed head of department. The recently produced departmental development plan identifies improvement to the school laboratories, raising standards in external examinations, upgrading information and communication technology provision as priorities, and these reflect areas in the school development plan. However, the plan lacks

clearly identified targets and success criteria.

## ART AND DESIGN

135. In the end of Key Stage 3 statutory teacher assessments in 2000, attainment was close to the standards expected nationally. Boys were attaining better than girls. In lessons observed during the inspection, very few pupils were reaching the expected standards. The attainment of boys and girls was similar. Sound practical skills are developed, especially in three-dimensional work, but drawing and painting skills lack range. Pupils have too little opportunity to initiate their own research or to work independently. Critical skills in evaluating their own work and that of others artists are weak and pupils have only limited knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, craftworkers and designers. Pupils rarely use technical language and writing skills are weak. Visual concepts such as line, pattern and texture are under-developed. Pupils in Year 7 have limited experience in handling clay, but demonstrated skill in cutting, piercing, shaping and joining clay to interpret their ideas at a level in line with those expected for their age. Pupils in Year 8 showed sound skills in handling wire and papier-mâché to create three-dimensional figures, but had little knowledge and understanding about the work of other artists. Sketchbooks have been introduced since the previous inspection, and the use made of them is now sound. They are used mainly for pencil drawing with little experimental work. Overall, standards are similar to those found in the previous inspection, and show the same limitations in relation to pupils' drawing skills and their understanding and application of the visual elements of art.
136. Since the previous inspection, GCSE examination results have improved at a faster rate than that found nationally. In 2000, the percentage of pupils achieving A\*-C grades was below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining A\*-G grades was in line with that found nationally. The average points score for pupils at the school was slightly below the national average. The attainment of boys was in line with that for boys nationally, but for girls, attainment was below the national average. Attainment by boys has shown a rising trend over the past three years, but for girls, attainment is not improving and remains below average. Pupils currently in Year 11 are attaining below average standards. Boys and girls are currently achieving similar standards. Pupils achieve well in art and design compared with their average across other subjects.
137. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, supported by the tightly structured course. However, this inhibits more able, gifted and talented pupils from achieving as well as they could, especially in the development of individuality and self-motivated research. Pupils are still heavily dependent on secondary resources and the teacher's support. Under-achievement of the most able at both key stages was identified in the previous inspection, and remains an issue.
138. The great majority of pupils show an interest in their work and during lessons, concentrate well. Only when work is unstimulating do pupils lose interest, as in a Year 8 lesson where there was too little challenge in the worksheets used, and pupils could not make connections with the practical work they had been doing. Boys show higher levels of interest than often found, and many continue the subject to examination level. Year 9 pupils enjoy projects in

which they feel they can make a personal input. Behaviour is almost always good, and pupils are responsive to requests from the teacher. They are cooperative, efficient and careful when organising and clearing up materials. Little time is wasted as a result. Relationships between pupils and with the teacher are good, but boys and girls rarely mix or communicate with each other.

139. Teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, the majority of lessons were sound. Where teaching was good, Year 7 pupils were encouraged to share their previous knowledge of clay, and challenged through questioning to develop their own ideas about different ways in which they might use it to interpret facial features. This led to better standards of practical work than had been observed in a previous lesson, where pupils were shown techniques, but not asked any questions to explore their own ideas. Lessons were generally well organised for practical work. Expectations of good behaviour and classroom organisation were made clear. Time was well used and demonstrations of practical activities were clearly presented so pupils usually made sound or better progress in their practical artwork. Pupils know what tasks they have to achieve, but are less clear about how well they are doing in their work, why they are doing it and how they could improve. Homework is set infrequently and marking, although consistent with the school's scheme, is not sufficiently regular and does not provide clear targets for pupils or advice about improvement. Discussions that take place on an individual basis between teacher and pupils in lessons are more helpful. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from this support. Teaching and learning suffer from insufficient challenge for pupils as they move through the school. Key skills such as drawing and painting, and pupils' knowledge and understanding of different artists, are not progressively developed. Too little time is devoted to the development of pupils' speaking, reading and writing skills to enable them to express views about their own work and ideas and the work of other artists.
140. There is only one teacher of art who, in addition to managing the subject, holds responsibilities as a head of year. Although a programme of training for middle managers has been started, the teacher has had very limited opportunities for professional development and for professional dialogue specifically about teaching and managing art in the school. Lines of senior management responsibility for the subject are unclear.
141. The planning of developments in the subject is weak, limited to acquiring resources without clear links to raising attainment. Data is not sufficiently analysed to establish strengths and areas for development, for example, in the relative performances of boys and girls. Systems for assessment are insufficiently detailed to provide pupils with the information they need about how well they are doing or how they can improve. Although identified as an issue in the previous inspection, provision for information and communication technology remains poor, with inadequate provision of equipment, software and training. As a consequence, the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for art are not met. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is weak, and pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to experience original art or artists. Insufficient attention is paid to the context, meaning and purpose of art, or examples from different cultures. Only very limited progress has been made in addressing issues identified in the previous inspection.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

142. Compared with all schools nationally, standards of attainment are below the national averages for both 14 and 16 year olds. Standards are similar to those reported in the previous inspection.
143. The attainment of pupils aged 14 was below the national average when they were statutorily assessed by their teachers in 2000. However, the quality of pupils' planning and their work seen during the inspection was much better than their teacher-assessment would suggest and it was similar to that produced by pupils in similar schools. Pupils' knowledge and skills on entry to the school are low, but planning and making skills improve dramatically and are good by the end of Year 9. Pupils' capability to design does not develop so well and is below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils of all abilities are able to make good progress and there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls or minority groups.
144. In 2000, pupils' GCSE results were close to the average for pupils in similar schools. However, the percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was below the average for all schools nationally. Results for grades A\*-G were close to the national average. Boys' results were lower than girls', by a similar margin to that found nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades in the different GCSE courses varied significantly. In graphics, results were significantly above the national average whereas they were well below in resistant materials and food. The way pupils opt, and small groups in some courses, explain some of these variations. Overall, pupils are achieving well in design and technology compared with their average across all their subjects.
145. Standards of work seen in Key Stage 4 during the inspection were consistent with those found in these recent GCSE results. Making skills are well developed with pupils using a good range of materials and techniques to produce products of a high quality. Design skills are not well developed except in graphics where pupils were seen analysing information on soft drinks containers and developing brand identities of their own. Pupils' independent learning skills are not well developed, with pupils relying heavily on teachers to direct and support design work. The tightly structured course at Key Stage 3, where in the past, design has not been fully introduced until Year 9, is one cause of this. The course is very effective in allowing lower and middle ability pupils to develop and apply knowledge of materials and skills to make quality products. However, it restricts opportunities for more able pupils to engage in open-ended design challenges and is limiting their creative development and independent learning skills. Recent changes to Key Stage 3 schemes of work have partly addressed this issue.
146. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and this is a significant improvement from the previous inspection. Teaching in all lessons was at least satisfactory. Objectives are now shared with pupils at the start of lessons, thus rectifying a weakness highlighted in the previous inspection report. Teachers' subject knowledge, planning and preparation are very good. Excellent relationships were evident with pupils responding very positively to the high expectations set by teachers. This was particularly the case in the quality of making. In

some lessons a technician or craft assistant was present. The extra adult was particularly effective with resource management and support for pupils making slow progress. The pace of lessons was maintained as a result and all pupils completed the set tasks. During lessons teachers monitored the progress pupils were making very well and intervened when appropriate. In a textile lesson, for example, where pupils were transferring details of decoration onto a pattern an impromptu recap by the teacher on the function of a pattern consolidated pupils' prior learning and clarified the task.

147. Pupils were seen making good progress during lessons and achieving higher standards than results at the end of both key stages would suggest. A significant reason for this is that the effect of recently appointed teachers has not yet impacted on published results.
148. All teachers use displays of work very well to support lessons and, with the exception of food, displays were excellent in quality. Appropriate homework is set although many pupils do not record this in their planners. A significant number of pupils do not hand in homework when it is due.
149. An appropriate range of materials is used but the school is not effectively complying with some requirements of the National Curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to use electronic and other control systems are severely restricted. There are early signs that computer aided design (CAD) work is developing, supported by the recently installed computers in the department and a link with Teeside College. However, the department lacks computer aided manufacture (CAM) equipment, such as computerised sewing machines or three-axis machining, and so cannot deliver this requirement of the national programme. The range of specialist software is severely limited, particularly for graphic design, research and materials databases.
150. In Key Stage 3, pupils experience a range of materials, through short units of work with specialist teachers. Where designing is taught, it is done well by individual teachers but there is no coordination of this across the department to ensure consistency of pupils' experiences and assessment of their progress.
151. Although there have been links with local businesses for individual GCSE projects and pupils attend a career conference, pupils' awareness of industrial practices is underdeveloped. There are no visiting speakers planned into the curriculum, or opportunities for pupils to see design or manufacturing first hand in local businesses. In addition, links with parents and the local community are underdeveloped.
152. There is a newly appointed head of department. Leadership of design and technology is satisfactory overall. However, the plan for further development is weak and not clearly focused on improving teaching and learning. It does not clearly identify measurable outcomes, costs, time scales, and lines of responsibility. Formal assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is not sufficiently consistent and the analysis of information from assessment is very superficial. Results are not effectively analysed to identify strengths and where improvements can be focused, and whether there are groups or individuals who may be under performing.

## GEOGRAPHY

153. Overall, standards are well below national averages at both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, results were well below the national average. In the school's results there was no difference in the performance of boys and girls but, when compared to the performance of girls and boys nationally, girls performed less well than boys.
154. In 2000, in GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well below the national average. The number of A\*-C grades has fluctuated since the last inspection. All pupils entered achieved A\*-G grades which is above the national average of 97 percent. Against the national averages the performance of girls is lower than the performance of boys. The performance of pupils in geography is slightly lower than their average across other subjects. The results for 2000 fell below those for 1999 and standards are not as high as at the last inspection. The limited literacy skills of some pupils have a negative impact on standards of attainment.
155. During the inspection, standards observed in lessons and in pupils' written work in Key Stage 3 were generally below average. Pupils are taught in ability groups and standards achieved in lessons reflect this. Pupils in higher ability groups are reaching the standards expected nationally. They have a good level of geographical knowledge which was demonstrated in a Year 8 lesson in answers to questions on economic development. In written work they show a satisfactory understanding of environmental issues and are able to provide clear explanations of the factors affecting climate and population.
156. Pupils in lower ability groups are generally making satisfactory progress. They are acquiring a sound level of geographical knowledge. In a Year 7 lesson on the water cycle pupils were able to describe the water cycle clearly, using the appropriate geographical vocabulary and posing their own geographical questions. In Year 8 and Year 9 lessons the inability of some pupils to listen restricted their achievement. Some pupils find it difficult to provide explanations in writing because they find it difficult to express themselves clearly.
157. Standards are improving in Key Stage 4. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were developing a good understanding of the reasons for rural urban migration. The written work of higher attaining pupils showed that they were able to provide clear explanations of coastal erosion and present good quality course work. However, there are considerable variations in the standard of written work presented by pupils in Key Stage 4 due to the variation in literacy skills. Some pupils are too dependent on the teacher and do not always think through answers for themselves. This was demonstrated in a Year 11 revision lesson.
158. During the inspection, there was no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys, although in classes where boys significantly outnumber girls, the girls did not participate in the oral work.
159. The quality of teaching seen was always satisfactory. In some lessons it was good. The specialist geography teacher has a good subject knowledge that was used well in lessons to provide clear and detailed explanations. Lessons were well planned with clear learning

objectives that were shared with pupils. The quality of questioning was good, challenging pupils and encouraging them to think for themselves. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher used a video effectively to pose questions on the reasons why people move from rural to urban areas. This helped pupils to clarify their understanding and give competent explanations of migration in Brazil. In a Year 7 lesson, effective use of questioning and a focus on key words encouraged lower attaining pupils to use their knowledge and understanding to describe and explain the water cycle. This gave them the confidence to then pose their own questions, for example, “What would happen if there were no seas?”

160. The teacher endeavoured to establish a positive climate for learning in every lesson. Lessons were conducted at a brisk pace and there were high expectations of pupils’ behaviour. There was a consistent and persistent approach to managing pupils’ behaviour. The concentration of pupils with identified behaviour problems in certain classes created a challenging teaching situation. In two lessons where pupils found it difficult to concentrate, the teacher, together with the support teacher, was able to ensure they remained on task and made appropriate progress. Support staff were used effectively in lessons to ensure their pupils maintained concentration and were able to learn from the tasks they were given. However, the advantages of the small teaching groups for lower attaining pupils were not always used to their full.
161. Homework is set regularly and is usually an appropriate development of the work done in class. However, the marking of pupils’ work does not give them sufficient guidance on what they have done well and what they must do to improve further.
162. Geography is a one-teacher department. This specialist teacher has been in post for one term and is committed to re-establishing the profile of geography in the school after a term of classes being taught by supply teachers. A good development plan is being produced which focuses on raising standards and improving the learning opportunities for pupils. There is some monitoring of classroom practice but it is not clear how the outcomes of this are used to improve teaching and learning.
163. Schemes of work are being re-written to include the use of information and communication technology and to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to do fieldwork each year. This is addressing the issues, identified in the last inspection, of the provision of fieldwork for Year 8 pupils and the greater use of computers. The schemes of work, however, do not sufficiently identify approaches to teaching and learning, especially for different groups of pupils. Limited time allocated to Years 7 and 8 is resulting in some lack of depth in covering some topics.

## **HISTORY**

164. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards as measured by national tests were below average, in 2000. This was similar to the level of attainment in 1999. The school results show little difference between the performance of boys and girls. However, when compared to the national averages, girls’ performance is lower than boys’. In lessons seen this difference in

performance was not apparent.

165. At Key Stage 4, it is not particularly helpful to measure the attainment of pupils against the national average as the number of pupils taking the GCSE examination in 2000 was too small. 16 pupils were entered for GCSE, 14 boys and two girls. Of these pupils, five gained A\*-C grades and eleven gained A\*-G grades. This was lower than in 1999 when 12 pupils out of 15 gained A\*-C grades. Girls are performing better than boys. Of the 15 pupils entered for this examination ten were girls. The ability of some pupils to express themselves clearly is adversely affected by their limited literacy skills.
166. During the inspection, standards observed in lessons in Key Stage 3 reflected the ability groupings of pupils. Pupils in the higher ability groups were performing in line with the national expectations for the subject. They generally have a good level of historical knowledge which was demonstrated in question and answer sessions in lessons. These pupils had a sound understanding of cause and consequence and were able to explain, in their written work, the reasons for particular historical events. They were able, for example, to write about the significance of religion in medieval times and give the points of view held on Henry VIII's situation in relation to marriage and the church. In one piece of work pupils presented their own views on the interpretation which the film '*Braveheart*' gave to the relationship between England and Scotland. Over the key stage their written work improves and they are able to produce some good pieces of extended writing. Pupils were less confident when asked to work independently on source material, as in a lesson on Hitler's treatment of the Jews. In this lesson many relied on the teacher to support them.
167. Lower attaining pupils were performing below national expectations but made satisfactory progress in lessons. In lessons on life in a monastery and soldiers in the civil war they improved their knowledge. They were interested in the topics and, in the lesson on life in a monastery, were able to pose their own questions. The ability of these pupils to provide clear explanations of historical events and produce pieces of extended writing is limited. Some pupils take great care with their work which is well presented.
168. In lessons at Key Stage 4, pupils showed they had a sound knowledge of conditions in the workhouses and were able to evaluate the reliability of sources, although there was variation in the quality and depth of pupils' responses. In the written work seen, some pupils were able to give cogent explanations of the importance of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and write about the different viewpoints on the Corn Laws. There were examples of good work on the analysis of sources about women's suffrage. There is a limited amount of extended writing which shows how pupils can structure their knowledge and understanding into a coherent account. Much of the written work comprised short answers to questions.
169. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons seen it was good. The specialist history teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject and uses this effectively in question and answer sessions. Questions help pupils to recall their prior learning and extend their knowledge, but do not always probe pupils' understanding sufficiently or challenge them to think for themselves.
170. Lessons were carefully planned to a clear format. Learning objectives were clear and shared with pupils, and appropriate attention was given to explaining key words. Resources

were adapted for the lower attaining pupils. In lessons, the teacher provided these pupils with encouragement and good support. However, the advantages of having small teaching groups for lower ability pupils were not maximised. Higher attaining pupils were not always challenged enough. Activities and questions did not develop their ability to think more deeply and be more independent in their learning. Limited use was made of paired and group work as a teaching technique to develop pupils' independence in learning.

171. In lessons pupils were well managed and relationships between the teacher and pupils were good. Pupils were responsive to the teacher and most wanted to contribute to the lesson. Pupils in a Year 7 class were particularly interested in the topic on monks and monasteries and made a real effort with their work.
172. Homework is set regularly which is related to the lesson and extends pupils' learning. The marking of pupils' work is regular but is not sufficiently focused on telling pupils what they have done well and what they must do to improve.
173. The department is a one-teacher department. This specialist teacher is very conscientious and has produced a range of materials to support pupils' learning. There is a development plan but it does not contain measurable targets or a timescale for actions. There is some monitoring of classroom practice but it is not clear how the outcomes are used to improve teaching and learning.
174. The scheme of work covers statutory requirements but it does not contain sufficient information on how the learning needs of different groups of pupils will be met. The use of information and communication technology is being developed now that there is easier access to computers. Ways of improving pupils' writing skills are being planned. A good range of visits is provided for pupils. There is one in each year, including a residential visit to Ironbridge. There is only one lesson per week allocated to history in Years 8 and 9 which is making it difficult to ensure continuity of learning and provide sufficient opportunities to study topics in depth.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

175. Overall, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are close to those expected nationally and are broadly similar to those at the time of the last school inspection in 1997.
176. Only one fifth of pupils at age 14 in the Year 2000 statutory teacher assessments reached the standards expected nationally. Approximately two-thirds of pupils do so nationally. Pupils' ICT work in subjects other than ICT were not taken into consideration when these assessments were made. However, work seen in ICT lessons, and in other subjects and written work completed earlier this year indicate that standards have improved. They were in line with the expected standards in all of the lessons seen.
177. Standards in work seen at the age of 14 were close to those expected nationally. By the end of Year 9 most pupils are able to select, organise and process information. They can

evaluate their use of software. However, pupils' use of the World Wide Web and electronic mail is underdeveloped and they do not yet compare the use of ICT with other methods of working.

178. Pupils' GCSE results at the age of 16 in 2000 were below the national average and they were slightly lower than their average across other subjects in the school.
179. Standards were higher than this in the work of the current Year 10 and 11 pupils. Inspection evidence indicates that, of those pupils entered for GCSE in 2001, about two thirds are currently close to achieving GCSE grade C or better. Higher attaining pupils are able to discuss and review the impact of ICT in a range of contexts. However, they do not yet consider the ethical and moral issues related to ICT applications in enough depth. Lower attaining pupils, who follow a basic ICT skills course, were able to apply fundamental ICT knowledge and skills in a given range of situations. Boys and girls were achieving similar standards.
180. Pupils' development of literacy and numeracy skills is evident in ICT lessons. Their word processing skills demonstrate acceptable standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing letters and reports and also when they design brochures in Year 10. They use databases and spread sheets to analyse numeric data in their GCSE projects.
181. In specialist ICT lessons seen, standards of teaching and learning were always at least satisfactory. Teaching was good in some lessons and there were no examples of unsatisfactory teaching. This is because teachers of ICT had good subject knowledge, planned and organised lessons well and used appropriate resources effectively. In turn, this enabled pupils to make satisfactory progress and had a positive impact on their standards of attainment. For example, pupils at Key Stage 4 understood how data can be collected and used in a commercial setting using *MS Excel* and could make informed decisions about choice of software. In Year 9, pupils confidently manipulated text and pictures when designing a soft drinks carton.
182. Pupils' attitudes are generally good. They enjoy ICT and take pride in their work. They are willing to participate fully in lessons and readily offer answers to questions from their teachers. They treat ICT equipment with respect. They are eager to do well.
183. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It is best in GCSE project work where pupils receive constructive feedback from their teachers that helps them improve and make good progress. At Key Stage 3, it is variable with some good developmental marking offset by some uninformative teacher judgements and occasionally no marking at all. During lessons, however, teachers continually check that pupils are making progress and provide them with good oral feedback.
184. The quality of homework is variable. Sometimes it is effectively used to help pupils consolidate class work and prepare for lessons. It is less effective when used merely to complete classroom tasks.

185. Although the majority of subjects make use of ICT applications in their teaching, planned provision overall is not yet in place. Evidence seen of effective application of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum includes design and technology, English, media studies and science. In English lessons, for example, pupils access information from CD-ROMs and the Internet to develop their research skills. In design and technology Year 9 pupils use ICT to good effect for investigating text fonts in graphics lessons. Subject areas in need of further development include art and design and music, where there is currently no provision.
186. The management of the department is satisfactory overall and was broadly similar at the time of the last inspection. However, although the department's development plan links to the school's improvement plan, it is over-ambitious in the number of targets set and about half are not yet achieved. There is no policy for pupils' use of the Internet. There is no system to coordinate assessment information from other subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 for statutory teacher assessment. The monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but the use of assessment data for planning teaching is inconsistent. Although the previous ICT coordinator provided subject leaders with appropriate National Curriculum information, monitoring of the implementation of statutory ICT at Key Stage 3 across the curriculum is underdeveloped.
187. Many pupils take advantage of ICT facilities after school where they are available each weekday in the homework club. Pupils have access to support with their schoolwork and this has a positive impact on standards, particularly in the presentation of GCSE coursework. A slowly increasing number of pupils are also beginning to use their home computers for schoolwork. The pupil/computer ratio is approximately 4:1 which is very good and provides pupils with good access. The stock of software titles is steadily increasing. A skilled, full-time technician keeps the technology running smoothly and provides effective day-to-day maintenance and also some learning support.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

188. Standards overall are below those expected nationally.
189. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment is below average. In 2000, 62 percent of pupils gained National Curriculum Level 4 or better in teachers' assessments of their Spanish, marginally less than the national average. No pupils gained Level 6 or better. These results follow a consistent trend over the past three years. The quality of work seen in lessons, however, indicates that actual standards are not as high as these teacher assessment figures suggest. There were few examples of pupils producing extended pieces of written work and there were not enough examples of their using a variety of tenses to indicate that they had a secure grasp of key grammar points. There was no difference in the performance of boys and girls.
190. By the age of 16 the attainment of pupils is well below average. In 2000 12.3 percent of pupils gained GCSE grades A\*-C, compared with the national average of 48.5 percent. 98.5 percent of pupils gained grades A\*-G (national average 98.2 percent). Boys performed significantly better than girls. Pupils' results in Spanish were significantly lower than their average across their other subjects. These results do not reflect the trend over the

previous three years when Spanish results improved in line with the general improvement in results in the school as a whole. The standard of work seen during the inspection, however, shows that standards are still below national averages. There was no evidence that any pupils were on target to gain the highest grades, although a substantial minority of pupils were working at or towards, grade C, which suggests that there will be some improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C in 2001.

191. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress given their relatively low general attainment on entry into the school. Pupils of average and below average ability make good progress but, for pupils of above average ability, progress is unsatisfactory.
192. At Key Stage 3, pupils of average and below average ability make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. They make particularly good progress in developing oral skills. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils were able to build on the basic vocabulary and structures to produce conversations of considerable length with a good Spanish accent. Pupils of above average ability are, however, not being given the opportunity to achieve well. By the end of Key Stage 3, they demonstrate neither the secure grasp of grammar nor the ability to produce accurate extended writing needed to achieve National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6.
193. At Key Stage 4, the pattern is similar with average and below average pupils often producing work of good quality while teaching is not enabling pupils of above average ability to acquire the breadth of vocabulary or the mastery of structures that will allow them to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
194. Overall teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Classroom management is a strength of the department. Relationships between pupils and teachers in lessons seen were nearly always good. Teachers were sensitive and sympathetic to pupils' needs, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. When faced with challenging behaviour, teachers set clear boundaries. Lessons were well-planned and had clear objectives usually with a single focus.
195. Teachers have good subject knowledge. All are competent speakers of Spanish and use the target language effectively with average and below average pupils, showing good judgement about when the use of the target language is appropriate. The use of the target language with the most able was not as widespread as would be expected given the pupils' capabilities. This has a detrimental effect on their progress in developing listening and speaking skills.
196. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to learn independently. This particularly affects the progress made by pupils of above average ability. With these pupils, learning is too strictly controlled by the teacher with the result that pupils are often engaged in producing model answers which have a high degree of accuracy and serve the needs of average pupils well but do not allow able pupils to produce more complex responses. Where learning was good, pupils were allowed to go beyond basic models as in a Year 7 lower ability lesson where pupils improved their expected responses by introducing vocabulary that had been learned in previous lessons.

197. The department has a good range of resources which it puts to good use. In Year 11 classes, pupils preparing for the GCSE writing test were using material that was specifically written to guide them through this particular section of the examination. In one Year 7 class, the use of the video camera had a particularly motivating effect on pupils' performance. Pupils have regular access to ICT facilities so that they can draft and re-draft their work.
198. Assessment is not used effectively to plan subsequent teaching nor to improve the performance of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3. Neither pupils nor teachers are clearly aware of the level towards which pupils are working. Although pupils' work is marked conscientiously and teachers consistently follow departmental policy, teachers do not identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, pupils have no clear idea about what they need to do to improve their performance, and teachers cannot use information from marking in planning future lessons. Good practice does, however, exist in the department. In one Year 11 class, the teacher was assessing written work clearly against GCSE criteria and, for each pupil, pointing out what they had done well but also what they needed to do to improve their grade. Although all lessons seen had clear objectives, these were either not shared with pupils or not expressed in terms of what pupils were to learn. Consequently, pupils were unable to assess what they had achieved in lessons.
199. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory. There has been some improvement in GCSE results, particularly for the percentage of pupils in Year 11 achieving grades A\*-G. At this inspection, there was no unsatisfactory teaching seen. All teachers now follow the departmental guidelines for the marking of pupils' work. Little progress has been made in catering for the different needs of pupils in broad ability bands, particularly the most able. Assessment is still an area where further development is needed.
200. The department is well-led. Teachers in the department work together well as a team and they have a shared commitment to move forward. The management of the department's work has some good features. The head of department monitors the work of the department effectively. As a result, agreed procedures, such as those for marking pupils' work, are applied consistently. The monitoring of teaching is becoming increasingly effective. Lesson observation is conscientiously undertaken and there is evidence that the results of these observations are being discussed at departmental meetings. Planning further development is not yet effective. Targets in the departmental development plan are not measurable and actions to achieve targets are not prioritized. Data is not yet used effectively to monitor the work of the department and to help improve pupils' performance.
201. The department offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. In addition to trips abroad, the department offers revision classes for GCSE Spanish and after-school classes in German for gifted and talented pupils.

## **MUSIC**

202. Overall, standards are close to national averages at both key stages.

203. In the National Curriculum statutory assessments in 2000, attainment was slightly below the national average, largely due to boys performing below the standards expected. Girls' attainment was higher than nationally expected.
204. GCSE music has only recently been introduced and results in 2000 were well below the national average with the number of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades well below the national average. There is evidence that these results will improve in future years as Year 10 pupils are now attaining more in line with the national standards. All pupils entered achieved A\*-G grades, which is above the national average.
205. Standards observed during the inspection were close to what is typically found nationally, with no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
206. At both key stages pupils were demonstrating a control over instruments which was close to that typically found. In some cases the pupils' instrumental skills exceeded the national expectation. This was the case in a Year 10 GCSE group where pupils were performing music of a complexity greater than what might be expected at this key stage, sometimes on more than one instrument. Pupils' knowledge of music was close to the national expectation. At Key Stage 3, pupils could name a wide range of instruments (including those from other cultures), they were aware of music from a range of different times, places and peoples and could talk intelligently about the music they heard. At Key Stage 4, pupils had an awareness of harmony and could use chords in their own compositions.
207. At Key Stage 3, standards in singing were well below what is expected. Pupils had not been taught the vocal skills of posture, diction and breathing required to produce a pleasing vocal performance. At both key stages pupils did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the emotional and expressive power of music. Their compositions tended to be led by theoretical and abstract stimuli which produce compositional exercises rather than by a personal expression of their own thoughts and feelings.
208. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their achievement in music. Their progress is largely in the form of improved instrumental skills and musical knowledge which, by the end of Key Stage 3, are close to the national average. For example, pupils could perform a blues pattern and were aware of the harmony which underpins it. Their creative use of these skills and knowledge, however, remains below average by the end of the key stage. For example, when they compose a blues of their own it conforms exactly to the pattern but reflects very little of the emotional quality associated with the blues. They make very little progress in the use of technology as an aid to musical performance and creativity. The department possesses no computer nor software and so, this crucial avenue of progress and exploration is closed to pupils. At Key Stage 3, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged; and improved information and communication technology resources would be useful in achieving this.
209. It was not possible to assess the progress of pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 as there is no GCSE music group in Year 11. However, the progress being made by pupils in Year 10 suggests that their instrumental skills and musical knowledge will be satisfactorily developed

by the end of Year 11. Some pupils at Key Stage 4 are beginning to demonstrate an increased sense of individuality in their compositions. Their progress is accelerated by the work they do beyond the classroom, for example, by forming themselves into a band, by attending a local Rock School and by refining and recording their own music at home. The absence of adequate information and community technology equipment imposes a severe limitation on pupils' progress and creativity at Key Stage 4.

210. Pupils with special educational needs are adequately supported. However, there is too little creative music-making compared to theoretical work and this limits pupils' opportunities to achieve at a higher level.
211. In written work, literacy levels are only at best satisfactory. Too often the teacher invites only low level responses such as single word or single sentence answers. There is little evidence in written work of pupils reflecting on their own musical work or that of other composers and performers. Valuable lesson time is sometimes taken up by low level writing tasks when the time might be better used in practical music making.
212. Instrumental lessons are available on brass, woodwind and percussion instruments; these lessons are provided by the local music service. A charge is made to parents for these lessons but adequate systems are in place to ensure that no pupil is denied the opportunity to receive instrumental lessons because of their family circumstances. The department values this provision highly. Four percent of the school's pupils receive lessons which is only half of the national average.
213. Pupils enjoy their music lessons. The quality of teaching seen was good. It was always satisfactory and sometimes very good. There are good relationships between the teacher and pupils based on mutual trust and affection. Classroom control is patient, tolerant and fair but firm. Expectations of behaviour are high and made very clear to pupils. This expert classroom management enables pupils to enjoy practical music-making in a supportive environment. The teacher has good subject knowledge and musical skills which support the pupils' learning.
214. In the best lessons the teacher was active all the time, moving amongst the groups, making timely and helpful interventions; supporting, encouraging, suggesting. At crucial times during lessons, the teacher intervened to consolidate the work, hearing two or three of the groups perform to the rest of the class. These performances were used to refocus pupils on the task, and to share good practice. Sometimes the best examples were recorded as a stimulus and aide-memoire for the following lesson. The teacher expertly drew upon pupils' musical skills and knowledge developed from beyond the classroom. For example, in a Year 8 lesson a number of pupils brought in the instruments they have been learning with the visiting instrumental teachers. This added considerably to the sounds available to the whole class. In a Year 10 lesson the teacher embraced pupils' achievements from home, in church and in the community. The teacher makes good use of musical resources both in terms of the music pupils play and sing and in the musical recordings played to the pupils as examples. A Year 7 lesson culminated in a performance of *Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho*, a song which used the particular musical device under study, provided a useful platform for pupils'

improvisation and, as a Negro spiritual, gave pupils some insight into the music of another time, place and culture.

215. Within this overall context of good teaching, however, there are sometimes too many learning objectives for a single topic which leads to a lack of clarity about the skills, knowledge and understanding pupils are expected to acquire. This sometimes manifests itself in an over-reliance on the written and spoken word rather than the sound itself. Often lengthy explanation by the teacher takes the place of musical examples which would be quicker and place the teaching point within an aural framework for pupils. This also leads to an over-emphasis on the theoretical and abstract aspects of music above the expressive and emotional. Equally, too great an emphasis on the notation of music sometimes inhibits pupils' creativity. Singing is represented in music lessons but the teaching of vocal skills appears to be absent.
216. The display work in the music area is bright, attractive and aids learning. It relates directly to the topics the pupils are working on and gives examples of key words which the pupils need to use when writing and talking about the music.
217. The department organises a range of extended curricular activities including school choir, Year 10 Band, recorder and keyboard groups. These groups considerably enhance the musical opportunities and progress of the pupils who attend them and make a positive contribution to the life and ethos of the school. Through these activities and its classroom work, the department makes a significant contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In music lessons pupils learn how to work in co-operation with others, to respect others' opinions and feelings and to value others' contributions. In extra-curricular activities older pupils help younger pupils. For example, members of the Year 10 band accompany the school choir in their rehearsals and performances. The department's scheme of work includes the study of music from a range of different cultures, times and places, for example, the music of India, the gamelan music of Indonesia, Irish and English folk music. Beyond this the teacher ensures that the pupils are aware of the cultural context which the music represents, placing it in a spiritual and social context. The department's contribution to pupils' cultural awareness is a strength which could be celebrated more widely within the school.
218. The management of this single-teacher subject is a weakness, partly due to the isolation of the head of department from other music teachers and educators. The school's programme of monitoring teaching, as it impacts on the music department, has lacked rigour and structure. For example, the quality of the department's marking has not been formally monitored by the leadership team.
219. Overall, planning for further development is weak. The departmental development plan contains insufficient detail and is not directly linked to the school's improvement plan. Curriculum planning in the long term exists but is barely adequate in that the specific knowledge, skills and understanding demanded of pupils are not clearly identified. Short term planning of lessons is satisfactory in that lesson plans make clear the learning objectives (although there are often too many), the tasks set and the assessment opportunities. However, it is in the medium term planning (across a topic) where the planning is weakest.

It does not identify very clearly exactly what the musical focus of every topic is to be, what the learning expectations are and how they will be assessed, and how the tasks are to be differentiated.

220. Despite the funding for music increasing year on year, resources for music are poor. The absence of any software or hardware for information and communication technology within the department severely impedes teaching and learning. In addition, whilst the number of electronic keyboards available is probably sufficient, many of them have mini-keys which are unsuitable for secondary pupils. The tuned percussion instruments are little more than toys and do nothing to encourage pupils to produce beautiful sounds and take a pride in their work.
221. There has been satisfactory progress in the department since the last inspection report. Standards have improved. The quality of teaching has moved from satisfactory to good. GCSE music is now sometimes available whereas at the time of the last inspection there was no GCSE music provision. The response of pupils remains good and the passivity of pupils referred to in the last report has now largely disappeared. Pupils' progress is more limited than the quality of teaching would suggest and it remains satisfactory. Whilst steps have been taken to ensure the needs of high and low achievers are being met, all ability groups are not provided with sufficient opportunity to produce high quality work. The use of information and communication technology has not been addressed. This is having an adverse impact on pupils' creative skills and remains a significant issue for the department. There has been considerable progress in the integration of the instrumental programme into classroom music. This was identified as a weakness in the last report and is now a strength of the department.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

222. Attainment of pupils aged 14 in National Curriculum statutory assessment in 2000 was well above the national averages for boys and girls. GCSE results have continued to steadily improve since the last inspection and pupils achieve significantly better in physical education than their average across their other subjects. In GCSE examinations in 2000, pupils' overall attainment and the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was close to the national average. There are no significant variations in the attainment of gender or ethnic groups. An increasing number of pupils are high achievers in a variety of sports and gain borough, regional and national honours. There are no pupils entered for GCSE in the academic year 2000 – 2001, however all pupils are entered for a short course GCSE in 2002.
223. Achievement overall is satisfactory and pupils make effective progress across the two key stages as a result of good teaching and pupils' very good attitudes to learning. However, at Key Stage 4 the decision to enter all pupils for a short GCSE course without the provision of additional time restricts opportunities to widen the curriculum and provide extension activities.
224. At Key Stage 3, all pupils show a good knowledge of the cardio-vascular and flexibility

aspects of the warm-up and cool-down and are able to participate in athletic events with appropriate levels of technical competence and efficiency. At Key Stage 4 they are able to draw on earlier knowledge and use this to adapt athletic performances. They show a good understanding of the health-related fitness aspects of the programme and many are able to perform advanced techniques with consistency and precision. The more able pupils can take responsibility for starting and timekeeping a sprint event and planning, running and evaluating a leisure activity.

225. The quality of teaching is good. With the exception of one lesson, all teaching seen in both key stages was at least satisfactory with a high number of lessons graded as good or very good. This teaching was characterised by: excellent relationships, good subject knowledge, very good planning, questioning and organisation and sound use of resources. Teachers had good expectations of pupils. Teachers used effective behaviour management strategies, and in Key Stage 4 used resources well. Teachers are increasing the opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 to develop independence and take responsibility but as yet this is not consistently developed within all lessons and continues to restrict the more able.
226. Where weaknesses existed, it was in the limited use of tasks related to pupils' differing abilities, a lack of opportunities for pupils to analyse movement, and, in Key Stage 3, a failure to provide specific feedback to enable pupils to improve their performance.
227. In both key stages, the majority of pupils learn effectively and make good progress. This is due to teachers' commitment and pupils' positive attitudes. Pupils are encouraged to set high personal standards of behaviour and attitude and show respect for each other; this results in their working well together in pairs and groups. Spiritual, moral, and social issues are fully integrated into the curriculum and teachers constantly reinforce that the talents of all children must be recognised and valued. Cultural aspects are not as well developed.
228. A variety of supportive partnerships help to raise pupils' standards and enhance the curriculum. Strong links are maintained with parents who support the school by helping to run and coach football, hockey, netball and table tennis teams. Two parents have recently been sponsored by the school to gain accreditation in FA coaching awards. Links have also been forged with Middlesborough Ladies Football Academy, Mowhawks Basketball and a local hockey club. Club coaches also support both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
229. The department has made satisfactory progress against the issues in the last inspection report. However, there are still too few opportunities being provided for pupils' independent learning. Assessment information is still not effectively used to inform curriculum planning or to set individual pupil targets.
230. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. The lack of a designated head of department is resulting in ineffective departmental management and coordination. Development planning is ineffective: whilst issues for improvement have been identified, important detail is missing which would help to ensure targets are achieved. The monitoring of teaching and standards has been randomly undertaken but no targets for improving teaching or review dates have been set.

