

INSPECTION REPORT

ST HUGH'S HIGH SCHOOL

Grantham

Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120718

Headteacher: Mr B Chapman

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Cosway
2734

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th May 2000

Inspection number: 196581

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensve

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: The Avenue
Dysart Road
Grantham
Lincolnshire

Postcode: NG31 7PX

Telephone number: 01476 405200

Fax number: 01476 405252

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Short

Date of previous inspection: March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P Cosway	<i>Registered inspector</i>		What sort of school is it? The School's results and pupils' achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? School data and indicators?
D Granville-Hastings	<i>Lay Inspector</i>		Pupils attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
H Wilkie	<i>Team Member</i>	Mathematics.	
S Richardson	<i>Team Member</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
R Frostick	<i>Team Member</i>	Music.	
D Benstock	<i>Team Member</i>	Science.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
R Allen	<i>Team Member</i>	English; English as an additional language.	
J Boulton	<i>Team Member</i>	Physical education.	
L Kauffman	<i>Team Member</i>	Special educational needs; Art.	
M Overend	<i>Team Member</i>	Geography; History.	
J Haslam	<i>Team Member</i>	Information technology; Design and technology.	

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD*

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a coeducational secondary school, educating children from the age of 11 to 16. There are significantly more boys than girls, because there is an all girls' high school within a short distance. In addition, the top 40 per cent of the ability range is admitted to the local grammar schools, selected by an 11 plus examination. It is much smaller than most secondary schools. There are 352 pupils on roll, of whom only 132 are girls. Pupils are drawn mainly from the immediate area, where there is a high proportion of local authority and rented housing. Almost all the pupils are white, although the school does have the advantage of a small number of pupils who represent other world cultures. For less than 1 per cent of pupils, English is an additional language, which is below the average nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, almost a third, is above the national average. The proportion identified as having special educational needs, 23.4 per cent, is also above average. There is a designated unit for such pupils, with 23 places for pupils with general learning difficulties. The school is a Church of England foundation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. It refuses to accept that the pupils in its care cannot achieve well, despite any previous disappointments they may have had. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory for children of their ability, although attainment is well below national averages. The school has high expectations of effort, progress and attendance, and all pupils have personal targets in every subject. Pupils are increasingly being grouped by ability in order to ensure that they have appropriately challenging work. Excellent leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by hard working senior managers and caring, conscientious staff, ensures that the school is improving steadily. It provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The school is raising standards of attainment and attendance.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to school and most work hard, realising the importance of study. Their behaviour is good, overall.
- Relationships and pupils' personal development are very good; moral and social development is good.
- Teaching is good overall across the school and teachers plan and prepare their lessons well.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good.
- It is a caring school, with good monitoring and assessment systems to guide pupils and help them to make progress.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades, A* to C, at GCSE needs to be higher. It is relatively good in some subjects, such as French, physical education and drama, but it is not good across all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' levels of literacy are low on entry and, although they make good progress, literacy problems still affect their abilities to express themselves well and to answer examination questions at the end of their time in the school.
- Levels of numeracy and attainment in mathematics are low.
- Attendance is below average.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school's last full inspection was in March 1995. At that time, it was deemed to be failing to provide its pupils with a satisfactory level of education. Since then there has been good progress. The proportion of pupils who gain five or more GCSE passes at the grades A* to C has risen from 6.6 per cent to over 15 per cent since 1996. The quality of teaching has improved from 66 per cent being satisfactory or better to 100 per cent, with many examples of very good teaching. Much of this is the result of the high expectations and guidance of the headteacher and senior managers, along with the commitment of the teaching staff. The last full report found significant weaknesses in teaching, monitoring, management and assessment, all of which have been addressed well. There are still some issues to be addressed, however, including the spiritual development of pupils and the inconsistency of standards between subjects. However, it is well placed to continue to improve in future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on their results in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	E	E	E	E

Key

A well above average
 B above average
 C average
 D below average
 E well below average

Over the past three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been well below average compared with the national average, and also well below the average for similar schools. The comparison with similar schools does not do justice to the attainment in this school, because the figures include schools with a fully comprehensive intake, whereas here the higher attaining pupils, the top 40 per cent, go to the local grammar schools. Taking their abilities into account, all pupils at the school achieve well. In the Key Stage 3 national tests, performance in science was below national averages but in line with that in similar schools.

Attainment has risen at GCSE, at a higher rate than that found nationally. There has been significant improvement in the percentage of pupils who have attained five or more passes at A* to C grades, although attainment is still well below the national average.

The inspection team found that attainment is currently similar to that indicated by last year's test and examination results. Attainment in mathematics and English has risen since 1999, although it is still well below average. Attainment in science is also better, though still below average. In some subjects, attainment has risen to become in line with national averages. These include physical education, design and technology, information technology and geography.

The school has set itself targets for the year 2000 of 22 per cent of pupils attaining five or more A* to C GCSE passes and 91 per cent attaining five or more A* to G passes. These are ambitious targets and are a further indication of the school's high expectations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils enjoy school and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: they relate very well to each other and to adults and accept responsibility very well. They work well together and treat everyone with equal respect and courtesy.
Attendance	Below average, with relatively high unauthorised absence.

The positive attitudes to work and school that the school engenders in all pupils are a strong contributory factor in its success. Pupils value the school and what it has to offer them. They want to succeed and so they sustain concentration in order to get the most out of their lessons. The pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility, as prefects, for example, or members of the excellent Student Council. They respond to these well. In the caring atmosphere of this small secondary school, most pupils learn to be considerate of other peoples' feelings and to respect adults and one another. The low levels of attendance of a number of pupils cause interruptions to their learning and slow their progress. The school works hard to try to convince the families involved of the importance of regular attendance, but this work is not yet effective.

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.

Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good at both key stages.

There are many strengths in teaching. Almost a quarter of all teaching is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. There is very good teaching in art, music and physical education at Key Stage 3 and many instances of good and very good teaching in English. Teaching is consistently good in some subjects such as design and technology, information technology and mathematics. The teaching meets the needs of all pupils very well, including those with special educational needs.

A strength in the teaching is the good planning of work, that often builds on and reinforces what pupils have already covered. Discipline is good in almost all lessons. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. The brisk pace of learning and the sustained concentration that result lead to good progress being made. Basic skills are taught well. Overall, the quality of teaching is a strength of the school and, as a result, learning skills develop well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. It is a broad and balanced curriculum that provides the pupils with a satisfactory range of learning experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: the provision for these pupils is good and it is managed well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the provision for social and moral development is good. There is little planned provision for spiritual development, but it is satisfactory overall because of good provision in art, music and English. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well.

The school works well in partnership with parents. The information it provides for parents is good. The curriculum is generally broad, balanced and appropriate, enhanced by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including educational visits. The school cares well for its pupils overall. The procedures for ensuring attendance are good but not always effective with some families. There is no oppressive behaviour.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: excellent leadership from the headteacher and senior managers provides very clear direction for the work of the school, setting high expectations of both pupils and staff. The school is managed very well. This has been a key factor in its recent improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: the governors are supportive of the school and give of their time willingly to help the school and involve themselves in its work. They fulfil their responsibilities adequately and have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: at a whole-school level, the school evaluates its performance well and uses this information to guide the priorities for further development.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: almost all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. The accommodation is used well, though there are weaknesses in the range of accommodation for art, drama, English and physical education. Effective use is made of all learning resources.

The headteacher and his senior managers have set very clear direction for the work of the school and promoted high expectations of what the pupils can attain in terms of examination results and their personal development. They have had the full support of the governing body and the staff. As a result of the targets they have set, good monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the commitment of the teachers, standards are rising. Levels of staffing are adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum. The school successfully seeks best value in the use and deployment of all its resources and in the use of its budget.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>The large majority of parents who responded think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children are making good progress; • behaviour is good in school and so is teaching; • the school expects its pupils to work hard and is developing responsible attitudes in them; • they would be comfortable approaching the school with any questions or problems they may have; • the school is led and managed well. 	<p>Of the many parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 per cent of parents are concerned about the amount of homework that is set; • 16 per cent do not believe that their child likes school.

The inspectors agree with the positive points made by parents, finding that pupils make satisfactory and often good progress, behave well and develop a sense of responsibility. Their positive attitudes to school and good behaviour are positive influences, helping them to attain well and benefit from the good teaching. The homework provision is satisfactory. All the children spoken to during the inspection like school and are loyal to it.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

Attainment and progress

1. Overall, pupils make good progress during their time in the school. Their attainment on entry is low. Very few pupils gained a Level 5 in any of the three core subjects at the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils who reached Level 4, the average standard for their age, in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 was also low for the present Year 7, and has been even lower in the past. Just over half the pupils gained Level 4 in mathematics and science; just over a third in English. The top 40 per cent of pupils are accepted for the town's grammar schools and an all girls' high school nearby takes half of the remaining girls. The testing on entry that the school carries out gives a mean score well below average for verbal reasoning skills. The effect of the grammar schools is to skew the entry profile of the school so that it has a higher proportion of average and a much higher proportion of below average pupils than a typical comprehensive school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. It is characteristic of the school, however, and the high expectations it has of itself and its pupils, that it refuses to be labelled as a secondary modern school and so calls itself a comprehensive school. Comparisons of attainment made between this school and similar comprehensive schools show attainment in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations to be well below average. This does not reflect the progress that pupils are making or their achievements in relation to their abilities.

Key Stage 3

2. At Key Stage 3, improvement in performance in the National Curriculum tests over the last four years has been broadly in line with the trend nationally, but the attainment of pupils in the school has remained well below average compared with schools nationally. In the 1999 tests, attainment was well below average compared with similar schools, because the attainment on entry is relatively low. All pupils make good progress overall through the key stage.

3. The National Curriculum test results for 1999 show that attainment in both mathematics and English was very low. In science, pupils' performance was better. It was below the national average, but in line with that in similar schools. Pupils enter the school with higher levels of attainment in science than in the other core subjects, but they also make good progress from Year 7 to Year 9.

4. The findings of the inspection are that standards have risen, compared with those indicated by last year's end of Key Stage 3 test results. Attainment in English and mathematics has risen in response to good teaching and is now below, rather than well below, average. Attainment in science is also below the national average. In the other subjects of the curriculum, performance ranges from above average to well below average, compared

with attainment nationally. Attainment is above the standard expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in design and technology and information technology. Attainment in geography, art and physical education is in line with that expected at the end of the key stage. Attainment in music is also close to that expected for pupils of this age. In this subject, improved provision and good teaching are raising standards from a low level. In French, pupils are attaining standards below those expected for their age, but they make good progress. Attainment is below the expected level in history, where staffing difficulties, now resolved, have affected pupils' progress. Attainment is below expectation in drama because of weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills, despite good teaching, but they are making good progress.

Key Stage 4

5. Attainment at GCSE, measured by the average point score per candidate, has risen since the last report more rapidly than the average nationally. In 1996, the average point score, the most accurate measure of pupils' attainment over all the GCSE examinations they take, was 21.6, against a national average of 35. In 1999, the average point score was 25, a rise of 3.4 points against a national rise of three points. Nevertheless, the average point score was well below the national average. Boys did better, in comparison with boys nationally, than girls did against girls nationally, because many of the more able girls go to the neighbouring all girls' school, but both groups were well below average overall. It is a sign of recent improvement in the school that the proportion of pupils who passed five or more GCSE examinations at grades A* to C has increased. In 1996, 7 per cent of pupils achieved this. By 1999, it had risen to 14.5 per cent. Although still well below the national average of 46.6 per cent, this still represents a significant achievement for the school. The proportion of pupils who, in 1999, passed five or more examinations at A* to G was below the national average but in line with the average for similar schools. The proportion of pupils who left with at least one GCSE pass was also below the average nationally, but was higher than in similar schools.

6. The results at GCSE were close to the national average in some subjects, a commendable achievement for the pupils involved. In three subjects, drama, combined science and French, the percentage of pupils who attained A* to C passes was not significantly different from the percentage nationally, in physical education the pass rate at A* to C was above the national average at over 80 per cent. Attainment was significantly below average in all other subjects and especially so in mathematics, where only 3.6 per cent of candidates gained a grade C or above. The school has taken effective action to improve provision and standards in mathematics, and the finding of the inspection is that attainment is improving, but the effects are more marked in Year 10 than in Year 11. In six subjects, business studies, French, drama, combined science, English and English literature, every pupil who entered passed with a grade between A* and G. This is better than the average nationally. Nevertheless, the variation in attainment between subjects at GCSE is still a problem, as it was in the 1997 interim report. The school needs to continue to analyse why some subjects perform better than others at GCSE, and to share the best practice in order to improve results in those areas where pupils are under-performing. In the 1999 examinations, girls performed relatively poorly in three subjects, mathematics, English literature and design and technology. Their examination results in these three areas were lower, on average, than in other subjects. Boys also performed relatively less well in mathematics and English literature, as well as in art and design.

7. The finding of the inspection is that attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average, but has improved from the 1999 levels. It is close to average in speaking and listening. Pupils are confident and fluent and can address adults appropriately and well. Most pupils listen well. Reading skills are below average although some pupils are adept at using books and information technology to access information. Writing skills are well below average. Some pupils can write expressively and accurately, adapting their style well for different purposes and audiences, but the large majority have problems with spelling, grammar and punctuation. Expressing their ideas clearly in written form is a considerable effort for many pupils. Attainment is low in English literature. Pupils read with understanding and express their ideas about fiction competently orally, but again find it difficult to express their ideas well in writing. They have made good progress in English over both key stages.

8. Attainment in mathematics is well below average at the end of Year 11. A small number of relatively high attainers are capable of passing GCSE with a grade between B and C, but most pupils are working at grade D and below. Nevertheless, attainment is rising as a result of improved teaching and leadership; pupils at present in Year 10 are on line to attain better grades at GCSE than the present Year 11. All pupils make satisfactory progress through the school in developing numeracy skills. Pupils make good progress in science through Key Stage 4, although attainment is below average at the end of Key Stage 4.

9. There is a small group of subjects in which pupils attain well, considering their ability levels on entry. Attainment in physical education is in line with the national average, with some pupils showing good games skills. Attainment is also average in information technology, music, geography and design and technology.

10. Pupils also attain well in relation to their ability on entry in art and French, although at the end of the key stage, attainment is below the national average in these subjects. It was not possible to make a judgement on attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in history, because there were no lessons to observe in the week of the inspection and the pupils had their course work at home for revision. Attainment in religious education is to be the subject of a Section 23 inspection.

11. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire believe that pupils make good progress at the school and the inspection finds this to be true. Over their whole time in the school, for example, pupils make good progress in English and in the development of their literacy skills, even though they are still well below the national average at the end of Year 11. This is in large part due to the hard work of the English department, where teachers work skilfully to develop reading and writing skills. Drama provides good additional opportunities to develop a spoken vocabulary that pupils can transfer to their written work. Most subjects teach pupils the specialist vocabulary they need to succeed in their work and help them to express themselves better. There is a good awareness of the importance of literacy across the school and overall it is developed well.

12. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of numeracy skills overall in both key stages. Staffing difficulties in the mathematics department have delayed the production and implementation of the school's numeracy policy, but these are now resolved and the indications are that standards are now rising. Some effective work is done to support numeracy in art, science, geography, physical education, design and technology and information technology.

13. A relatively high proportion of pupils have special educational needs. They are supported well in their learning across the curriculum and make good progress. They attain standards that are good in relation to their prior attainment, because relevant pupil records are used to determine need and support. Progress is tracked effectively and very detailed records are kept on each pupil. At the end of Years 10 and 11, when pupils take external examinations, they have the option of selecting the certificate of achievement if they find the GCSE course inappropriate. By this stage pupils have made improved learning gains due to the successful monitoring and support of their individual need, which is enhanced by the co-operation between parents and the school. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress. No pupil in the school is at an early stage in their acquisition of English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in the school are good and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils respond very well to the opportunities offered to them and live and work together in a pleasant and sociable atmosphere.

15. Almost all pupils have good attitudes to learning. They show interest in their work, sustain concentration and readily apply themselves to the tasks set. They come to lessons with positive attitudes and a willingness to learn; they ask and answer questions, join in discussions and contribute well. Most pupils are good-humoured and relaxed. They are generally enthusiastic about lessons. In science, Year 10 pupils were highly motivated during a revision lesson on reaction rates, and Year 8 pupils showed real interest and excitement whilst testing for starch in a leaf. Year 9 pupils took great pride in their achievements in music and performed with confidence. All pupils showed a high level of commitment, enjoyment and enthusiasm for physical education and played indoor rounders with gusto. Year 7 pupils enjoyed their mathematics lesson on probability and showed good concentration. In design and technology, Year 9 pupils worked productively and purposefully when silk painting.

16. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. The 'discipline for learning' is understood and considered to be fair. Pupils are supportive of one another in lessons, helping and complementing each other naturally. They socialise well outside the classroom and the atmosphere is good-humoured. Teaching that bullying is wrong is given a high priority in tutorial time, assemblies and the education for citizenship lessons. Pupils report there is some minor bullying, but most feel they can go to someone for help and it will be resolved. They

have a strong sense of loyalty towards the school, and, partly as a consequence of their pride in it, there is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism. The behaviour and attitudes of the majority of special needs pupils are good. A small minority of pupils in Key Stage 4 finds it difficult to conform to the discipline of the school but the consistency of expectation across the staff helps these pupils to succeed.

17. During the last academic year there were three permanent exclusions and 52 fixed term exclusions, involving 32 students. So far this year, there have been 70 fixed term exclusions and two permanent exclusions, involving 43 pupils. This is high for a school of this size, but exclusions are the final stage in a clear, structured approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour and are not a sanction that is used lightly. All exclusions are fully documented. Parents are involved at all stages and generally support the school's approach and methods. The school is working towards a policy of social inclusion and has appointed three behaviour managers to begin work in September with pupils who have serious problems.

18. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are very good and create a supportive and caring atmosphere. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school, as can be seen by the respect the staff gives to the work of the student council. Pupils respect one another's feelings and are willing to listen to opinions different from their own. Discussions in education for citizenship lessons were lively and topical, and illustrated pupils' acceptance and tolerance of others very well. Pupils are polite and friendly, and enjoy having visitors to their school and lessons.

19. All respond well to the opportunities to take on responsibility within school. Two pupils from each tutor group are elected as representatives on the student council. This meets frequently, and its work is extremely effective and has a direct impact on the workings of the school. Through work in education for citizenship, Year 9 pupils and the student council created an equal opportunities policy that has now been adopted by the whole school and governors. The council is currently looking at the issue of bullying and hopes to set up a 'buddy' system to help pupils with problems. Year 11 pupils can apply to become prefects and are appointed after interviews. Prefects take their role seriously and support the staff very well at breaks and lunchtimes, helping to create and sustain the calm, yet friendly, atmosphere within the school. Pupils respond very well to the education for citizenship lessons. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils were looking at healthy eating, and Year 8 pupils considered the pressures put on young people by television and magazines to act or look a certain way. Year 9 pupils discussed the stereotypical expectations of boys and girls in friendships and relationships. Lessons were lively, interesting and illustrated pupils' respect and tolerance for other's opinions very well. The thought for the week in tutorial time was on human rights and again pupils responded with interest and seriousness.

20. Attendance at the school has improved since the last inspection, but is still unsatisfactory. The attendance rate for 1998/99 was 89.5 per cent, which was below the national average of 91 per cent. Attendance falls below 90 per cent in all years except Years 7 and 8. Authorised absence (at 8.6 per cent) was greater than the national average and unauthorised absence was high and above the national average. forty-one per cent of pupils have an

attendance rate less than 90 per cent. This has a detrimental effect on their attainment and learning because of the number of lessons they miss. Pupils register with their tutors in the morning and afternoon, and subject teachers take registers each lesson. Registers are marked accurately and absences are recorded correctly. Pupils are generally punctual to school and to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. At the time of the last report, there was a considerable amount of unsatisfactory teaching in the school; just over a third of all lessons were taught unsatisfactorily. Significant weaknesses in teaching were: the lack of pace, the limited opportunities given to pupils to ask questions and apply their own ideas, and the low expectations that teachers had of their pupils. In a number of important subjects, the quality of teaching was a matter of very serious concern, with more than half the lessons being unsatisfactory in English, science, design and technology and religious education. A number of teachers taught subjects that they were not qualified to teach and this adversely affected standards.

22. The school has made excellent progress in addressing the issues raised and is well placed to continue to improve in future. The senior management team has put in place an impressive programme of lesson monitoring and professional development, aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Twenty-eight teachers have left the school since the last inspection. This is an exceptionally high turnover in a staff that consists now of only 18 full time and three part-time members of staff. The headteacher has developed the few remaining staff and recruited new and enthusiastic teachers. Professional development has been carried out across the school, and support and career counselling provided for teachers who are recognised to be struggling with any aspect of their role.

23. As a result, there is now no unsatisfactory teaching in the school. Whereas 33 per cent of teaching was good or better at the time of the last report, the proportion is now almost 80 per cent, with just over 26 per cent of teaching being very good or excellent. The proportions of good and very good teaching are almost identical across the two key stages in lessons seen. Because of the timing of the inspection, a very restricted range of Year 11 lessons was taking place. As a result, many more lessons were observed in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.

24. Parents indicated in their questionnaire return that they believe teaching to be good in the school. Teaching is now a significant strength of the school and makes a major contribution to the quality of education and the standards attained.

25. The main strengths in teaching are in the good relationships that teachers engender, their good management and control skills, and the high expectations that all teachers have of the pupils in their charge. This leads to effective class control and a good ethos for learning in almost every classroom. In turn this allows pupils to concentrate and get the attention they need to help them to make progress. The lack of disruption enables the teachers to sustain a good pace and this leads to the pupils learning relatively quickly. Teachers go to considerable lengths to build the confidence of their pupils and to raise their self-esteem. An atmosphere of trust is created, in which pupils are able to share ideas and learn from their mistakes without being discouraged from trying hard in future. A good example of this was a French lesson taught to a Year 9 class. The teacher was seeking to develop their confidence and

competence in understanding spoken French, through a series of spoken exercises based on hobbies and clubs. She spent an appropriate amount of time consolidating the structures and vocabulary they would need to use in order to be able to answer the questions, and reminding them of the simple conversation routines that they had covered earlier in the course. This careful preparation and her willingness to accept their weaknesses without criticising them, but with a certainty that they could and would improve, built their confidence and helped them to meet the aims of the lesson.

26. Teachers use assessment and target-setting well. This has been another significant improvement since the last inspection. There has been an increased focus on this since then, and there is a much better understanding of the importance of the use of assessment information in the school as a whole. Pupils are set individual targets in every subject, their progress is monitored and teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the pupils that this monitoring reveals.

27. A feature of the better teaching is good subject knowledge that gives teachers the ability and confidence to extend and challenge even the most able pupils. Teachers plan well, setting clear learning objectives for the lesson. They share these objectives effectively, so that the pupils know what is expected, and they revisit them at the end of the lesson to consolidate learning. In a very good lesson on games skills with a Year 7 class, for example, the pupils were challenged both intellectually and physically by the teacher's high expectations and they rose to this well. Even though the lesson had had to be moved indoors because of the poor weather, the teacher used her subject expertise well, helping the pupils to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in one another's techniques in order to learn and improve their own performance.

28. Lessons are structured so that skills and knowledge are built gradually and progressively over time. This is a key feature of the good and successful teaching in the school and often means, as in the two examples already described, that a lesson starts with a swift review of facts and skills already taught. Resources are prepared to support lessons effectively. The pace of learning is brisk in the good lessons, and pupils are challenged appropriately. Those with lower attainment are supported in their learning, and the higher attainers are challenged and extended. Homework is used well to extend the learning opportunities in class. In a drama lesson, for example, on the arrival of the plague in Eyam, the teacher set the task for homework of writing a letter and a diary entry as if they were recording events at the time. This encouraged them to reflect further on their drama experience and to recreate and explore it in another medium, as well as reinforcing literacy skills.

29. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, there are many of the strengths that are consistent across almost all lessons. Teachers plan and prepare well so that the work is generally appropriate. It is organised so that pupils can build on what they have done and learnt previously. Although there is no unsatisfactory teaching, there are occasional weaknesses in some lessons that are, nevertheless, satisfactory overall. In some lessons, the balance of time given to particular activities does not enable pupils to gain as much from the lesson as they could. Sometimes, as in an otherwise good English lesson, pupils were allowed to spend too much time in group discussion that was not taking them forward in their understanding. Swifter intervention from the teacher, questioning and guiding the class, would have resulted in more being achieved. On other occasions, opportunities are missed to inspire and motivate the pupils. A history teacher, giving a lesson on native Americans, for

example, relied heavily on reading from a text book, occasionally losing the attention of the pupils. The pupils would have learnt more and been more enthused if the source materials had been drawn from the excellent writing, pictures and video extracts that have been produced about these fascinating people and their history.

30. Teaching is good at both key stages in English, mathematics and science. The planning and organisation of lessons are areas of strength, and generally ensure that time is used effectively in these subjects. Classes are well managed, to ensure that there is a good learning environment.

31. The quality of teaching is a strength in many departments and makes a significant contribution to standards and the quality of learning. In art, the aims are clear and teachers ensure that all pupils know what is expected of them and how to succeed. Positive use is made of praise and encouragement to build pupils' confidence and help them to succeed. Tasks are varied and interesting, which helps to motivate pupils. Teaching is very good across both key stages. In physical education lessons at Key Stage 3, teaching is very well focused on developing the skills that pupils need to succeed in the subject. At Key Stage 4, there are examples of very good teaching, but in some lessons there is less emphasis on improving pupils' performance. The teaching of music is good across the school, with examples of very good teaching that interests and inspires the pupils. Teaching is good overall in drama, information technology and design and technology. It is often challenging and interesting, leading to good learning from the pupils as they concentrate and try hard to succeed in response to their teachers' high expectations.

32. In French lessons, teachers' good knowledge and expertise and good classroom management skills lead to pupils working hard and making good progress. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, but good in Key Stage 4 with examination classes. Geography teaching is satisfactory overall, characterised by a good emphasis on the development of the skills necessary to succeed in the subject and good planning that ensures that all pupils are set work appropriate to their needs. As a result, all pupils learn at a good pace. History teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3, but it was not possible to observe any teaching in Key Stage 4.

33. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and of those for whom English is an additional language is good. It is always planned effectively to help these pupils to meet the targets they have been set. The targets in their individual education plans are not always specific enough about the progress they need to make in individual subjects, but good use of assessment information by teachers helps them make progress. The structure of lesson plans used by the school has a clear format for matching task to need. Many teachers successfully use a range of strategies to meet different needs in the class. English, mathematics and science use the independent learning system in the computer area specifically to support less able pupils. This system is used most successfully in English and science and provides a close track of small steps of improvement. Support assistants work well both with individuals and small groups.

34. Overall, the high quality of teaching is a very significant strength of the school and is identified by parents as one of its best features. It leads in most lessons to pupils developing good learning skills. They respond well to the expectations of them and work hard in class. Most make significant intellectual and creative effort. The clear instructions they are given always ensure that they know what is expected of them. In the large majority of lessons,

teachers use assessment to help pupils improve by ensuring that they know what they have to do to raise the level of their work. The move towards banding pupils by ability is making it easier for teachers to ensure that the work they set for pupils is appropriately challenging for all in the class and is helping pupils to make good progress.

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

The curriculum

35. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall. The provision for personal and social education is good and there are secure arrangements for careers education and advice. There is good liaison with members of the local community, such as the police, fire service and health organisations. Links with industry are satisfactory and the school has identified this as an area for development, although all pupils in Year 10 have the benefit of work experience for one or two weeks. A number of initiatives have been successful in establishing collaboration with the local primary schools. There has been good improvement since the last report, which criticised the curriculum for failing to meet National Curriculum requirements.

36. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is good. It ensures a broad and balanced programme that meets National Curriculum requirements. The allocation of time is in line with recommendations. The lesson time, of 50 minutes, is short enough to allow the number of lessons on the timetable each week to be relatively high. This broadens the curriculum; sufficient lessons are taught within the week for subjects such as drama and information technology to be included. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The education for citizenship programme currently encompasses personal, social and health development (PSHE) and cross-curricular themes. Sex education and drugs misuse awareness are covered sensitively in science as well as in personal, social and health development. Religious education is taught throughout the school.

37. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. There is a compulsory 'core' curriculum, covering subjects such as English and mathematics, and a limited range of options. The provision meets National Curriculum requirements. The vast majority of pupils are entered for GCSE, although a Certificate of Achievement has been introduced in some subjects. Provision is made for diverse options, such as GCSE physical education and motor vehicle studies, in order to respond to pupils' wishes. Also, additional time is given, after school, for GCSE art and design. All pupils have access to the full curriculum, despite the gender imbalance in the school as a whole. Years are set broadly according to ability, with a higher group, and parallel 'foundation' groups. Pupils also follow a comprehensive careers education programme, part of which is included in their personal and social education lessons as a module of work. Pupils in Year 10 follow a well-organised programme of work experience. Pupils in Year 11 take part in 'mock' interviews with representatives from local industry.

38. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The provision is well designed and co-ordinated. One class in Year 7 has an integrated course in order to focus on key skills. Learning support assistants enable pupils to have individual and small group activities. This is especially good where software specially written for pupils with special educational needs is used to support work in English, mathematics and science.

39. Literacy strategies are effective throughout the school. In all subject areas teachers plan and work to develop pupils' literacy skills because they recognise that these are low and need to be raised if pupils are to succeed. Teachers ensure that vocabulary appropriate to their subject is taught and used. They pay attention to developing the skills of oracy and reading. The promotion of numeracy is continuing to be established, and currently the teaching of numerical skills is good in some subjects, such as science and geography, but is satisfactory overall.

40. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. There are several active sports teams, a regular art club, and time is set aside for using the computer facilities. Drama is popular, although as yet there is no annual production, and musical activities, including band and choir, are being expanded. Some opportunities for educational visits are offered, although this aspect of school life is under developed. Considerable emphasis has been placed on providing opportunities after school for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the work they do in class, in supervised homework sessions in the library, for example.

41. Links with primary schools are well established, with good opportunities provided for pupils to spend time in the school prior to entry. Joint curriculum development has been effective in establishing the literacy and numeracy strategies. The links are not yet strong enough to ensure continuity and progression in all subject areas. Some primary school pupils use the good dining facilities and sports facilities at the school, thereby gaining early familiarity with the secondary school. There are satisfactory links with the local community, including use of the nearby sports centre and sufficient work experience placements for all pupils in Key Stage 4, and these enhance the curriculum, improving the learning opportunities available to pupils.

42. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall: it is satisfactory for the spiritual and cultural aspects, and good for the moral and social.

43. During the inspection, little planned provision for spiritual development was seen in this church school. Because the school hall was in use for examinations, and no other large space was available, class assemblies were conducted by form tutors, following a whole-school programme. The focus was human rights, and although the topic was handled effectively and sensitively in social and moral terms, the spiritual element was generally lacking. Only in two of the seven class assemblies observed was there a moment for individual prayer or reflection. This shortcoming is counterbalanced to some extent by moments of spiritual revelation in other subjects: for example, in the wonder felt at the grandeur of nature in the studies of volcanoes and earthquakes; in the lively appreciation of beauty in art, literature and music, and in the examination of spiritual and emotional aspects of human life in drama.

44. The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' moral development. A useful and effective disciplinary framework sets out rules explicitly, making both rewards and sanctions clear. Time is allowed in form tutor groups every term to refresh and renew pupils' familiarity with the framework, and this is done consistently across the school. The difference between right and wrong and strong moral values are fostered in the school, placing good emphasis upon truth, justice, fairness and honesty. This was done well in the class assemblies.

45. Pupils' social development is well supported by the ethos of the school, which is very effective in reinforcing confidence and encouraging mature responses to social situations. Pupils apply to be prefects, and to undertake the additional responsibilities that this entails. Many are successful and in their role act as good models of responsible and polite behaviour to younger pupils, who, in turn, treat them with respect. This reinforces the very good relationships between all pupils and adults that are such a feature of the school. The prefects attend an annual formal dinner, which gives a sense of occasion and provides valuable social experience. The highly successful student council includes ten representatives from each year group and expresses a strong sense of school identity and social responsibility. Recent initiatives in which the student council has been involved include: an anti-bullying scheme, an equal opportunities policy, the provision of picnic benches, and plans for new building developments. The whole school shows social responsibility in its fundraising on non-uniform days, and pupils participate readily in clubs and activities.

46. The school's curriculum contains a variety of cultural experiences, in such subjects as art, music, history and English. Two visits to dramatic productions have taken place in the last year. There is a good cultural dimension in the school's reading policy, which is planned to increase pupils' enjoyment of books and provide a good range of cultural opportunities through the study of good literature. There is a developing recognition of the multi-cultural dimensions of the modern world, the experience of which is largely denied to these pupils, who are almost exclusively of one ethnic and cultural background, and this is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last report. The good overall provision then for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils has been consolidated, but more work needs to be done to strengthen the spiritual dimension, which was criticised in the last report.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school offers a good level of care and support for its pupils, appreciated by parents and pupils alike. This area was a strength at the time of the last inspection and continues to be so.

48. The school gives a high priority to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. An effective child protection policy follows the local authority procedures. The designated officer has not yet attended formal training, but provides good advice and support for staff and pupils. Information is disseminated to teaching and non-teaching staff via meetings. Good use is made of outside agencies and lines of communication are clear. Arrangements for dealing with first aid, sickness and accidents are good. The school follows clear and detailed guidelines for the organisation of off-site visits and activities, and there are regular checks on fire and electrical equipment. The health and safety policy identifies roles and responsibilities within the school clearly, and surveys of the site and premises by staff, pupils and governors are carried out regularly. Risk assessment within the science department is good. Although the

school has not yet implemented a formal and rigorous programme of risk assessments of activities across all departments, this is in the development plan.

49. The school offers good support and guidance for its pupils and provides a secure and caring environment. Tutors play a central role in making this so positive. Tutors and pupils stay together for five years. They have a 15 minute tutorial together each day and an education for citizenship lesson each week. This gives plenty of opportunity to build stable and effective relationships. Teachers and tutors know pupils well individually, and have a genuine concern for their progress, welfare and personal well-being. Pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable, responsive and encouraging. The quality of the relationships is the basis upon which much of the personal support is built, and this contributes to pupils' confidence and attitude to school. The school is a happy place and most pupils enjoy being there.

50. The school has good systems and procedures for encouraging and maintaining good discipline and behaviour, and maintains a climate of trust, respect and honesty. The 'discipline for learning' is well established and thought to be fair and reasonable by pupils. It has a high profile throughout the school, being displayed in all classrooms and frequently referred to by staff. The rewards and sanctions are clearly understood by pupils, and felt to be effective in maintaining good behaviour and attitudes. Some pupils in the school have difficult behavioural and emotional problems. The school works closely with outside agencies to support these pupils and is developing a specific programme with behaviour managers (beginning in September) to work with them. All members of staff show respect for their pupils and for each other. The example they set contributes strongly towards the calm and friendly atmosphere within the school.

51. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and this is improving as a result. Tutors and office staff follow up absences on the first day, and keep record sheets for all pupils. The school works very closely with the education welfare service to help the hard core of poor attenders. Attendance of tutor groups and year groups is monitored each week. Individual pupils receive credits for 100 per cent attendance in the week, and attendance is included in their termly progress grades. Pupils with attendance less than 90 per cent are not allowed to be prefects and may miss out on social events such as the student council 'disco'. Tutor groups are rewarded for weekly attendance over 90 per cent and assemblies often focus on the importance of good attendance. The school uses every opportunity to remind parents of the need to ensure their child attends school regularly but there are some parents who condone and accept absence.

52. Good systems support pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils are awarded termly progress grades that indicate how they are working towards their targets. The targets are based on National Curriculum levels for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and on GCSE grades for Years 10 and 11. Pupils understand the grades and can explain what they need to do to improve. Tutors meet with pupils individually to discuss their progress grades and parents receive a copy of them. Assemblies recognise the progress made by pupils and progress awards are given at the beginning of terms to motivate and encourage all pupils to improve in the term ahead. Pupils use their homework planners diligently. They are expected to record their homework accurately and ask their parents to sign weekly. Planners are checked by tutors so that any concerns about homework are picked up immediately. Pupils comment on their own performance as part of their annual report and identify their strengths and

weaknesses well. Teachers have in-depth knowledge of all their pupils and they communicate well with each other. This plays an important part in the on-going process of monitoring the overall progress of pupils through the year.

Assessment of academic progress

53. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment have been thoroughly revised since the last inspection and are now good. The new school policy on assessment, recording and reporting, which includes a section on marking, gives clear instructions to be followed by departments. Departments are required to draw up their own policies in line with whole-school policy. Departmental documentation, records and samples of pupils' work are routinely monitored by senior staff for compliance. As a result, with the exception of history, assessment and record-keeping are consistent and effective across all departments. Assessments are expressed in terms of National Curriculum criteria and levels or GCSE grades.

54. The school has made a satisfactory start to using assessment information to guide curricular planning. In most departments assessment data are used to set individual or departmental targets. In science, however, data are being used to calculate how much value has been added to pupils' attainment across each key stage. In design and technology and in information technology, projects are routinely evaluated and teaching adapted accordingly. In French, analysis of results is leading to modification of schemes of work. At a whole-school level, the composition of teaching groups has been reorganised and the option system modified. It is, as yet, too early to evaluate the impact of these changes. Some analysis has been completed on the relative performance of boys and girls, but little action taken at present on the results. The relative performance of different groups of pupils has yet to be considered in depth.

55. Unsatisfactory progress is followed up closely by form tutors or heads of departments as appropriate. Clear guidance is given on how to improve. Pupils have a good understanding of their current level or grade. However, their knowledge of the exact meaning of this assessment, what they can or cannot do, and what they must do to improve, varies from subject to subject. It is very good in art, design and technology and information technology, and good in English. It is not developed in history. A full report is issued for every pupil annually and a Record of Achievement at the end of Year 11.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The school has maintained the good partnership with parents reported in the last inspection and is constantly looking for ways to develop the relationship further.

57. Parents hold very positive views of the school. They feel that it values their support and that their concerns are acted upon. They find the teachers approachable and helpful, and they appreciate the level of care given to their children. The high number of returned pre-inspection questionnaires indicates parents' interest in and support of the school.

58. Parents receive good quality information about the school and its philosophy. The prospectus and annual report from governors provide a good level of detail on how the school works and what parents can expect. Letters home keep parents up-to-date with events and

activities. All around the school, displays of pupils' work and photographs of activities and events give a good flavour of school life. Articles and photographs appear frequently in the local newspaper, giving pupils' achievements the recognition they deserve. This raises the profile of the school within the town and gives pupils and parents a sense of pride in their school.

59. Parents and carers are kept informed about their children's progress through termly progress checks. A grade for their attendance is also given. Whilst there are no supporting comments from teachers, these grades do give parents an indication of progress and they are invited to contact staff to discuss them further if they wish. The annual reports give a general description of what pupils have studied within each subject. National Curriculum levels are given, but with no explanation of whether the pupil is working below, above or in line with the expected level for her or his age. Suggestions for ways to improve are given. Sometimes these are very specific and helpful, and give useful advice to parents on how they can help at home. Other times the suggestions are too general or use educational phrases parents may not understand, such as 'help your child develop number bonds'. The informal communication between staff and parents is very good. Parents are kept well informed about concerns regarding behaviour or homework.

60. The school is keen to encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education. As tutors now stay with the same group of pupils until they leave, parents have a stable point of contact which results in good relationships. Attendance at the parents' consultation evenings is improving and, at the recent Year 9 options evening, 97 per cent of parents came to school. The home-school agreement is in place and clearly indicates what both the school and parents can expect from each other. Parents received the draft agreement and their views were sought prior to the final version. Parents are invited to the progress assemblies to celebrate pupils' achievements and there are often more than 80 parents there. The efforts the school has made to involve and include parents have increased parents' confidence in and support for the school. Parents show a sense of loyalty towards the school, and appreciate the way in which it has improved since the last inspection. This two-way loyalty and trust have created a positive atmosphere that contributes directly to pupils' learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The last report noted that the routine organisation and administration of the school were good, but the management was not effective in ensuring that the school's aims were met. There were serious criticisms of the effectiveness of the school's planning for the future and of the role of the governors in the identification of priorities, the development of a shared vision, and the establishment of an appropriate management structure. There was no provision for the monitoring and evaluation of work in and across departments. The work of middle managers needed to be reviewed, because many were not carrying out their responsibilities well. Statutory requirements were not being met for the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all.

62. Good progress has been made. Development planning is now good. It has been improved in departments and the school as a whole for a number of reasons. Effective management and leadership, and the restructuring of the senior team, have led to improved communication with governors and all members of staff. As a result, there is common

understanding of whole-school aims and values. Effective professional development has ensured an agreed and consistent approach to the process of planning. The systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of teachers and pupils are now very good. The school still does not meet all the statutory requirements indicated in the last report, but progress has been made. Some statutory information is missing from the governors' annual report to parents, and not all acts of collective worship meet statutory requirements.

63. The quality of leadership is very good overall. The headteacher, with the three assistant headteachers, provides excellent leadership in setting a clear educational direction for the work of the school. He has a clear vision for its future. He has high expectations of both pupils and teachers, along with an informed, balanced and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. His energy, vision and determination have lifted the school from 'special measures' and raised it to the point where all members of staff share a common ambition to raise standards even further and realise the academic and personal potential of every child. Optimism is evident in every subject area. The three assistant headteachers play a significant role. They are hardworking and experienced as well as very loyal to the school and the headteacher. Their internal promotions have given a new impetus to their work. The decision not to appoint a replacement deputy, but to give additional responsibilities to these three long-serving members of staff, has resulted in an excellent system of support and communication for the teachers in the school. With only 18 full-time teachers, having four of these on the leadership team means that it is easy to involve, monitor and consult everyone. There is a strong sense of teamwork, commitment and involvement everywhere in the school and this ensures that school policies, especially those concerned with target-setting, attainment, teaching and learning, are understood and implemented across the school.

64. The systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum development, at senior management team level, are rigorous and effective. Regular reviews of teaching are led by members of the senior management team, department by department, together with reviews of work in exercise books, as part of a planned monitoring cycle. There is detailed feedback to individual teachers and to subject areas. Where necessary, targets are set, further monitoring planned and carried out, and professional development prioritised. The outcomes of monitoring are reflected in the priorities set in the whole-school development plan as well as in department planning.

65. The effectiveness of the monitoring process is evident in the considerable improvements in teaching, learning and standards since the last report. It has led to increased consistency in lesson planning and delivery, as well as more consistent implementation of school policies for teaching and learning. Teachers are aware of the criteria that are being used to monitor the quality of their work in the classroom. In most departments, the head of department plays a significant role in monitoring and sharing good practice, but some find it difficult to adhere to the guidance on monitoring because they are teaching at the same time as the rest of their subject colleagues.

66. Governors are supportive. Most know the school well and give readily of their time. They liaise effectively with the senior management team; participate in the setting of the school development plan as well as the budget, and seek to link the two effectively. The finance group helps to monitor the budget, and has begun to monitor the effectiveness of major budget decisions. Some of the governors bring specific strengths and skills to their work, and overall the governors fulfil their role well. The monitoring role of the governing body is developing well, but is still at a relatively early stage of its development. It needs to be more formalised, especially in the way it monitors the school's curriculum.

67. Most heads of department provide very effective leadership, giving clear direction to the work of teachers in their charge. The organisation and administration of departments are generally areas of strength and help to ensure that the work of the school runs smoothly.

68. The management of provision for special educational needs is very good, and the management of the teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. The special educational needs policy meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. The register of special educational needs is accurate, and the records of identified pupils are well kept. Statutory requirements for the statemented pupils are fully met. The team of support assistants is managed effectively. The school keeps very clear records that are open to teachers and parents, and the close involvement of parents with the school ensures in most cases that the home environment is supportive and extends the learning opportunities that the school provides. The management of equal opportunities is good. The equality of opportunity is implicit in the schools' ethos and the documentation of most departments indicates awareness of the need to provide equality of opportunity for all. The performance of pupils in tests and examinations is monitored by gender, and the tutorial programme offers pupils the opportunity to consider issues relating to self-esteem, stereotyping and prejudice.

69. The very good and very effective leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team is the principal reason for the school's success and for the rapid improvements that have been made. The management style is an inclusive one, allowing all a share in the decision-making process, and the loyalty and commitment shown by all staff support the management of the school well and ensure that it is well placed to continue to improve in future.

Finance

70. The school budgets systematically and well for all expenditure. The leadership team and the governing body allocate major funding decisions according to the priorities outlined in the School Development Plan, and always seek best value in the allocation of contracts. Their experience as a grant maintained school is serving them well in their application of the principles of best value. Heads of department have responsibility for their own budgets and similarly seek to maximise the value they can get from their funding in terms of the effectiveness of the resources they purchase. Overall, the quality of educational provision has benefited from the wise and careful management of the budget. Funds have been allocated successfully to areas of educational priority. These have proved successful in raising standards and the quality of educational experience for pupils. The improvements in information technology resources, for example, have helped to raise standards in that subject

area by enabling more departments to have access to a wider range of more modern resources. The decision not to appoint a new deputy following the promotion of the last has proved an efficient and effective judgement. The quality and rigour of financial management are good: the last auditors' report was generally complimentary and the few minor issues it raised have all been addressed satisfactorily.

71. The school makes effective use of new technology. It is used well for administration and in many subject areas. Special grants, such as those for educating pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, are used appropriately. There is regular review of the effectiveness of spending decisions by the senior managers, informally, by governors. Overall, taking account of the progress made by pupils, the quality of teaching, and the very good personal development of pupils off-set against the relatively high costs of the school, value for money is satisfactory.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

72. The good match of the number, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum provides effective support for pupils' learning. Teachers are well deployed and the very few instances of non-specialist teaching have no adverse effect on learning. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. There has been a large number of staff changes since the last report, including appointments at head of department level in mathematics, music, design and technology, English science and drama, where improving standards are now evident. The staffing for the education of pupils with special educational needs is good.

73. All members of the non-teaching staff, including the bursar, the site manager and his staff, the catering and the administrative staff, are committed to the personal development of pupils, provide good support for teachers and are a strength of the school.

74. The school has a thorough induction programme for all new staff that includes mentoring and the observation of lessons. There is an effective system for appraising the work of teachers and senior members of staff review the work of departments regularly. The school has good arrangements for professional development. Training needs are identified through management initiatives linked to the school development plan and through departmental review procedures. Over the previous four years much internal staff training, in raising awareness of special educational needs and differentiation activities, for example, has been successfully completed as whole-staff initiatives. Since the previous inspection the school has improved the level of staff expertise. This has had a beneficial effect on staff morale and the success of the school.

Accommodation

75. Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are inadequacies in physical education, art, drama and English. The gymnasium is the only indoor area for physical education. The hall is available infrequently because it is used for assemblies and examinations. The tennis courts are not fully enclosed by netting, the storage facilities are

very limited and the cricket wicket is overgrown. In one English lesson during the inspection, teaching was interrupted by rain from the leaking roof. Art and drama lessons are taught in similar temporary buildings with leaks and undulating floors. A strength of the school is the use that teachers strive to make of this inadequate accommodation. The facilities for science and information technology are very good and enhance the pupils' learning.

76. The school is clean and well maintained. The pupils respect the buildings. They leave some litter around the paths and fields. This has to be regularly removed. There is no evidence of graffiti. Access to the upper floors and therefore to some specialist facilities, such as science laboratories and food technology rooms, is not possible for pupils with disabilities. Efficient procedures are in place for fire, health and safety matters, but risk assessment has yet to be included in department policies.

77. The reception area is welcoming. The quality of display in all public areas of the school, especially in the exhibition area, is very good. It is celebratory and includes a variety of artefacts. Display in the subject areas of mathematics, art, geography, physical education and drama is very good.

78. The library is spacious and the adjacent study centre is attractive and provides good support for independent learning. The picnic area, the dining hall, medical room, information technology rooms and exhibition area are improved features of the accommodation since the previous inspection. The school has submitted realistic bids and funding has been secured to improve the accommodation in English, art and drama in the very near future.

Resources

79. Resources in the school are at least adequate in all subject areas and good in many. Spending on resources has increased considerably since the previous inspection and most subjects have a good stock of books and equipment. Significant improvements since the last inspection are seen in the provision for information technology. This includes two large information technology rooms providing sufficient computers for full classes, 20 lap-top computers, a group of ten computers in the library resource centre, and individual computers in most subject areas. The ratio of one computer to every 4.5 pupils is well above the national average. The stock and condition of books in the library are reasonable, with a good fiction section, but subject-specific books need further updating. The total number of books per pupil is above the national average at 17:1.

80. Outside resources such as museums, art galleries, off site sports facilities, field visits and visitors to the school, including artists and actors, are used well, but could usefully be extended to further advantage these pupils, some of whom have very restricted access to such experiences outside of school. For pupils with special educational needs, there is a good range of reading materials at different levels, as well as regular access to appropriate computer programmes. The budget allocation system has been improved since the previous inspection and department heads are now budget holders. Texts books are being taken home more regularly and independent learning is being encouraged, with the library and resource centre open at break, lunchtime and after school. The school has significantly improved its resource provision overall and this has had a positive effect on pupils' development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

81. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:

- * evaluate the successful strategies used by those departments that attain a relatively high proportion of A* to C passes at GCSE and adapt them in other subject areas to raise the attainment of pupils so that it is more consistently high across the school.
- * further raise the literacy levels of pupils from the time they enter the school in order to give them the skills they need to communicate successfully in and out of school, in speech and writing.
- * raise levels in numeracy by continuing to implement the recently introduced numeracy policy across all departments. It is necessary to monitor its effectiveness and act on the outcomes of monitoring to improve provision further.
- * liaise with parents and carers more urgently in order to convince them of the importance to their children of regular attendance at school.

82. The governors are urged to include in their action plan the following areas for development, which the inspection team noted with concern but did not pick out as key issues. These are:

- * some aspects of the accommodation, including the English, art and drama rooms, which are in poor condition and let in rain. Some parts of the school do not provide an acceptable or healthy environment for learning and this has a negative impact on standards. The standard of accommodation for physical education is inadequate, especially in poor weather, when the lack of indoor provision means that lessons are overcrowded.
- * the standards of teaching and attainment in history.
- * the relatively weak provision for the spiritual development of pupils, which is out of character with the school's role as a Church of England foundation school.
- * not all statutory requirements are being met in that the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not include all the statutory information that they should, and there is not an act of collective act of worship for all every day.

The work of the special unit

83. The unit ensures that all pupils are given equal access to learning through effective testing on entry to identify need and continued close monitoring through individual education plans. Standards are in line with expectations for pupils with general learning difficulties, and the fourteen core studies lessons each week in literacy and numeracy in the Year 7 course enable pupils to make good progress in these important learning skills. For the remaining subjects of the curriculum, pupils are fully integrated into the main school.

84. On entry to the school, all pupils are thoroughly screened through the effective use of school records and other specified data. Prior to entry to the school, Year 6 pupils are visited in their primary school and a well-planned summer school activity, including teaching information communication technology, inducts pupils into their new learning environment. This ensures that the most vulnerable pupils have an opportunity to build their confidence. Any pupil with a reading age below ten years automatically goes onto the support register.

85. A battery of valuable tests is used systematically to identify improvement or the need to take an alternative course of action. There is good communication between the parents, learning support assistants and the special needs co-ordinator. This group jointly and effectively monitor the development of the individual through close adherence to the pupil's Individual Education Plan. Annual and interim reviews examine progress and social development and, as a result, establish new targets. Individual education plans (IEPs) are available to all staff in a digested form. They target the general skills pupils need to improve. At present the Individual Education Plans do not offer an opportunity for departments to present additional targets that link back to improving a particular subject skill.

86. The tasks that teachers set their pupils are well matched to need, which is an improvement on the situation reported by the previous inspection in 1995. Effective class participation, when developing newly acquired skills, encourages pupil's confidence. They read aloud with confidence in class; make useful, mature contributions to discussions, and enjoy challenge through rigorous mental mathematics at the start of each mathematics session which develop the numeracy strategy skills from their primary school. Spelling and reading projects involve parents and it is this type of homework that forges strong links with parents. Pupils make good use of a computer-generated, independent learning system within the department. The system assists learning in English, mathematics and science by giving pupils instant feedback on their progress and by issuing reports about individuals' progress to inform future planning. Good use is made of paired work to consolidate learning and raising standards; this is an improvement on the previous report. There is good follow-up to the independent learning system in English and science, but mathematics does not incorporate teacher feedback into planning. The learning support assistants track pupils' progress effectively in the wider curriculum, where time allocation permits. This ensures that each pupil's statement of need is fully met.

87. In the unit, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are a unified group, but in the wider curriculum they are socially well integrated, which has a valuable impact on their personal development.

88. The quality of teaching is very good and well supported by the effective learning support assistants. Positive relationships and the regular exchange of information within the special needs team have a good impact on teaching and learning. Basic skills are taught with flair and imagination in core studies. Well-chosen resources challenge pupils creatively and intellectually, which ensures that pupils enjoy their learning and, in turn, make good progress. The participative nature of the teaching is a strength of the department. Planning is thorough and detailed in response to individual need and creates a good level of understanding. Stimulating activities push pupils forward, and they are not afraid to try, because they understand that everyone makes mistakes as part of learning, as seen with less confident readers. When in role as reading detectives, they almost burst with enthusiasm in an attempt to share what they found out in the story. Teacher's expectations are clear and have a positive impact on behaviour as well as learning.

89. Assessment is in place in the formal monitoring of Individual Education Plans and the annual review, which involves parents and agencies that support the school, such as the education psychologist. The use of praise and credits is part of the culture of the department, which encourages the celebration of success. Homework club is an important part of the unit's work, and pupils are exposed to a regular pattern of homework similar to their peers.

90. Management of the special needs department is good. The special needs co-ordinator is also an assistant head and carries a very heavy administrative workload. Time is a most serious issue for the management of the department and administration consequently suffers. Although the school plans to use a computer programme to monitor pupils' progress, there is very little targeted administration support for the department.

91. The special needs governor has a good understanding of the needs and the strategic development of the department, but the school does not report its strategies for supporting special needs in the school brochure.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	105
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	25	54	20	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	358
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	104

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	23
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	107

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.9
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	49	24	73

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	15	21	21
	Girls	15	7	10
	Total	30	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	41	38	43
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	1	15	14
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	20	20	27
	Girls	16	10	13
	Total	36	30	40
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	49	41	56
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	18	18	10
	National	31	37	28

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
	1999	36	24	60

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	7	33	36
	Girls	4	22	23
	Total	11	55	59
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	14.5	87.1	98.33
	National	46.3	90.7	95.7

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	25
	National	37.8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	355
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	52	3
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:
Y 7– Y 11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

**Education support staff:
Y 7– Y 11**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	207

**Deployment of teachers:
Y 7– Y 11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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**Average teaching group size:
Y 7– Y 11**

Key Stage 3	24
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Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1066455.00
Total expenditure	991232.00
Expenditure per pupil	2777.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-8384.00
Balance carried forward to next year	66839.00

*Results of the survey of parents and carers***Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	352
Number of questionnaires returned	280

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	51	10	6	2
My child is making good progress in school.	36	51	11	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	44	13	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	52	16	6	4
The teaching is good.	41	49	6	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	46	12	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	40	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	27	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	38	50	8	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	46	45	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	55	5	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	40	8	2	10

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

ENGLISH

92. In the national tests for pupils aged 14 (Year 9) in 1999, 41 per cent of pupils attained the average National Curriculum Level 5 in English. This is well below the national average of 64 per cent, and also well below in comparison with 'similar' schools. In fairness, however, it should be stated that in this context, the latter comparison is not entirely valid, since it is made with all non-selective schools in which 21 per cent or more of pupils are entitled to free school meals. It therefore includes schools which, unlike St. Hughs, have the full ability range on entry. This should also be borne in mind when considering the GCSE results, in which 31.7 per cent gained A - C grades in English Language, and 30.4 per cent in English Literature. National averages are 63.4 per cent and 67.1 per cent respectively.

93. In arriving at an estimate of the effectiveness of the school in English, the levels of attainment of pupils as they enter in Year 7 should be taken into account. Complete statistics are not available for the 1999 Year 11 group, but for the Year 9 group, only 27 per cent obtained the expected National Curriculum Level 4. The facts that some 40 per cent of the attainment range in each age group go to selective schools, and that the parents of a further group elect to send their children to a neighbouring girls' non-selective school, also have a significant bearing upon the results which pupils achieve.

94. The findings of the last inspection were: that standards were low in English, and that they were low when pupils entered the school. Learning was sound or better in only half of the lessons seen; teaching was sound or better in only one third of lessons in Key Stage 3, and in one quarter of lessons in Key Stage 4. Recording and assessment in English were inconsistent; planning was inadequate, and the subject was not well resourced.

95. The conclusions of the present inspection are that, while the standards of attainment remain comparatively low, there is an incremental improvement year on year, and that individual pupils' achievements and progress are good, giving good value added from the beginning to the end of their time in the school. Both teaching and learning are good or better, and therefore very significantly improved since 1995 and good planning, recording and assessment are now in place. The subject is now resourced satisfactorily.

96. In Key Stage 3, in the first of the three elements of English, speaking and listening, pupils perform better than in the other two elements, reading and writing. They are encouraged and supported in this by the school's particular ethos, which places emphasis upon confidence and trust, and enables all pupils to try to answer questions and offer their opinions. While no formal presentations or talks by pupils were seen, they show themselves to be attentive and respectful listeners, and ready responders to teachers' questions. In this respect, their attainment is close to the national average. However, it is not as good where carefully structured speech and considered answers are concerned: they tend to speak instinctively and without much forethought. This remains the case in Key Stage 4, but in the pupils observed in a Year 10 drama class, average achievement of more formal, premeditated speech was seen. In a higher attaining English set, pupils showed careful thought and speech as they commented upon and asked about the text of *Macbeth*. Very few Year 11 pupils were in school (except

for their examinations) at the time of the inspection, but those whom inspectors were able to meet answered questions fully and willingly, showing care and even poise in the way they responded. By the end of the Key Stage 4, a majority of pupils reach national standards in speaking and listening.

97. In reading, a small number of pupils show accuracy and fluency in each key stage. Nevertheless, attainment overall is below national standards in expression, in variety and range, and in the communication of meaning by intonation and pauses. Pupils in Key Stage 3 were heard to read at a speed that was sometimes appropriate and to correct their own mistakes, but their delivery is mechanical and even stilted as a result of little apparent understanding of the text. In Key Stage 4, this problem still persists: in their reading of *Macbeth*, while there was some identification of the general story line, the meaning of only the simplest passages was realised. As pupils move through the school, their reading improves; the quality of their learning and their progress are enhanced by good teaching, and by teachers' sharing their own enthusiasm. It is also well supported by the school's reading policy, which requires that all pupils should always have a book to read with them, and a small amount of time is allowed for private reading in English lessons. This policy is already bearing fruit, and improving standards.

98. In writing, pupils, on entry to the school, tend to produce quite extended stories, but these are poorly punctuated and simple in shape and ideas. Their choice of words is often very childish: 'it was a very smelly old house, shabby and trumpy'. They make good progress throughout their first year, and by the end of that year the majority of pupils achieve the expected Level 4 for the end of Key Stage 2. The main progress is in the fluency and amount of their writing, but their management of language is also better and more confident, using a wider range of vocabulary. Pupils' learning is enhanced and accelerated by a great deal of practice, by a process of drafting and redrafting, and by their recognition of their own targets for improvement in their individual action plans. Sound progress is maintained through Key Stage 3 and, by the end of Year 9, some 43 per cent are likely to attain the expected standard of Level 5, though the number doing better than this is likely to be very small. The work seen in Year 9 from pupils of average or above average attainment for the school shows more thoughtful, careful expression, with a sense of purpose and audience. Punctuation is often accurate, and sentences are correctly constructed, if still usually quite simple. The picture overall, in terms of numbers of pupils, is of attainment below the average, but of satisfactory progress characterised by learning which responds to an incrementally increasing challenge, clear and shared assessment, and good target-setting.

99. In Key Stage 4, there is the same high quality of learning, with GCSE attainment levels improved for the year 2000 Year 11 entry by a likely 10 per cent in English Language (Grades A - C), and 4 per cent in English Literature. Throughout the key stage, levels of competence in writing improve: ideas are better sequenced and good structure is imposed upon extended work, with appropriate paragraphing. A good range of texts is studied and some good work on *Othello* was seen from higher attaining pupils in Year 10. A good variety of written work is attempted: short stories, criticism, reports, narratives, and arguments. There is evidence of greater care, and of significantly increased application of technical skills as pupils move up the school.

100. Pupils show that they enjoy English, and this increases their capacity to learn well. This is achieved partly through their own good will, but it is also strongly promoted by the school's ethos, by teachers' collaborative styles, and by their skills in choosing and presenting appropriate work. The result is that pupils' attitudes to English are good - they arrive in lessons ready to enjoy them - and their behaviour is almost invariably good. They co-operate with their teachers well, and respect each other's opinions. They do not, however, have the skills of independent learning which make them self-starters, or which would drive them to seek the answers themselves rather than asking their teachers. They respond well to what is put before them, but they expect to be pushed forward.

101. Teaching is good throughout the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. There was one excellent lesson; of the rest, one third was satisfactory, one third was good and one third was very good. The best lessons were characterised by good planning, a clear sense of direction shared with the pupils, easy control, and good techniques of questioning of the kind which drives pupils on, makes them think and promotes their progress. All teachers have a friendly, collaborative style that engages pupils' co-operation. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and they know their pupils well. This enables them to plan appropriately for all, so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are provided with challenges that suit them and enabled to achieve standards that are appropriate to their prior attainment. The lessons that are no more than satisfactory provide some challenge, but, because insufficient explanation is provided, pupils are not able fully to respond to the situation. As a result, they are not kept on task and the teacher is diverted onto matters of control rather than content and task. Pupils' work is marked regularly, and teachers' comments are encouraging. They are also often analytical, setting targets for future improvement, although this is not always the case, and further development of the application of the marking policy is necessary. Formal assessment, according to both the school and the departmental policy, is regular, detailed, and thorough.

102. The subject is well led by both precept and example. The head of department is an enthusiastic specialist with a high degree of commitment to the pupils, to the school and to her subject. She has no illusions about the problems that face the department, and has a clear vision of the needs for a successful future. The departmental handbook is a comprehensive document, providing good guidance for teachers, and the programme of study and schemes of work provide a thorough developmental framework for the planning of teaching in the long, middle and short terms. The teachers in the department are loyal and committed. Resources for English are satisfactory. Course books, texts and anthologies are in adequate supply, and the department has a stock of readers, both small sets and individual copies, with which to promote reading. This is not, however, sufficient to provide the kind of small libraries in each subject room which would fully support the school's reading policy.

103. Since the last inspection, the English department has made good progress, and is in a good position to continue this improvement. It is significant that results at the end of Key Stage 3, when compared with those with which the pupils entered at the end of Key Stage 2, place the school in the top 5 per cent in the country for progress.

Literacy

104. The school's approach to literacy also shows success. There is a good cross-curricular policy to which the majority of teachers subscribe. In the teaching of many subjects, appropriate attention is given to the acceptable use of English: to spelling, to punctuation and to the use of the right technical language. There is a good focus upon key words in geography, mathematics, science, art and physical education. Technical errors are usually marked, although there is some inconsistency. Although not strictly part of literacy, pupils' skills of speaking and listening are linked to literacy and also receive attention. Pupils are frequently provided with opportunities to participate in class and group discussions, but formal talks and other presentations are less frequent.

MATHEMATICS

105. At Key Stage 3 in the national tests, pupils attained well below the national average both for the standard level and for the next higher level. These results were also well below those for comprehensive schools with a similar proportion of pupils receiving free school meals. This latter comparison, however, is of limited use given that the school does not have a fully comprehensive intake. Boys attained significantly better than girls and the results were lower than in the other core subjects. Results were similar to those in the previous year.

106. At GCSE, pupils attained well below the national average for grades A* to E. This was similar to the results for the previous year. There was not a significant difference between the results for boys and girls. The results were significantly lower than for most other subjects.

107. The school has an entry profile which is well below the national average, but the results in mathematics at both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE are well below what might be expected and indicate unsatisfactory progress for the pupils concerned.

108. From lesson observations and from the inspection of pupils' work, it is clear that, though attainment is still below national average, a marked improvement overall in standards has resulted from the introduction of a new head of department and second in department, who have raised teaching standards dramatically and have introduced a new feeling of higher expectations among the pupils.

109. Pupils' standards of numeracy are generally poor on entry to the school. The school is rightly making a major effort to improve these across the curriculum. In mathematics lessons, teachers often start with a warm-up session of mental work and likewise often conclude a lesson with a mental arithmetic game. Pupils enjoy these activities and numeracy skills are also well exercised in several subject areas. Pupils use calculators sensibly and accurately in general. The department has made a major effort to raise standards of presentation and this successful initiative is beginning to help raise pupil aspirations and attainment in lessons. Information technology was seen to be used effectively in one lesson during the inspection. In the lesson, lower attaining Year 7 pupils learned how to create geometric shapes successfully using LOGO. The department is aware that there is a need to develop this area and fully incorporate it into the curriculum at both key stages. Attainment in the Space and Shape and Data Handling attainment targets is generally satisfactory at both key stages. Investigative mathematics is in its early stages of development. The department is, sensibly, in the process

of introducing course work into its GCSE course to replace part of the examination papers at GCSE, because literacy problems make it difficult for pupils to show their true mathematical abilities in written tests. One very successful Year 11 project analysing the correlation between the age of cars and their cost was seen. Pupils with special educational needs attain appropriately.

110. Progress in lessons is generally in line with the quality of the teaching. Thus, in most lessons, pupils make good progress. Often this is the development of new skills, as seen in two Year 9 classes having their successful introduction to trigonometry. By the end of both lessons, pupils were able to solve most problems involving the trigonometric ratios in right-angled triangles with some confidence. Likewise in a very successful lesson with a lower attaining Year 7 class, the pupils, including several pupils with special educational needs, were able to use the terminology of probability appropriately by the end of their lesson.

111. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In all classes and round the school, good behaviour is the norm. In general, pupils enjoy learning and using mathematics. They particularly appreciate the mental arithmetic competitions that are used often to start or finish lessons. They are stimulated by the use of information technology and by demonstrations on the graphical calculator. They enjoy using data from the world around them. Pupils' concentration is usually good throughout the 50 minute lessons. They enjoy explaining their understanding to other pupils and often use the appropriate mathematical terminology. They generally take a pride in their work and have good relations with their teachers. The small group sizes help make the classrooms friendly places in which to learn.

112. Teaching is always good and occasionally very good. This represents a major improvement since the previous review by HMI and since the previous inspection. The teachers have raised expectations in terms of work and its presentation. Lessons are well structured, and many follow the national numeracy strategy guidelines, with short, sharp sessions on mental work to start or end lessons, and sound mixtures of teacher-led whole group sessions and practical sessions, when pupils consolidate their skills. Lessons are well paced to maintain interest, and good questioning is used in most lessons to develop understanding. This was seen in a higher attaining Year 10 class, where the teacher evoked a thoughtful response on the nature of irrational numbers by well structured questioning. Teaching is mainly traditional in style and is successful. Some good lessons, however, would become very good with the introduction of a greater variety of teaching approaches. Teachers have good relationships with their classes and they use praise and the rewards system effectively. Assessment plays a major part in the teaching and good record keeping alongside the target setting is normal practice. Teachers know their subject well and appreciate the potential pitfalls in learning. Homework is used well as a back-up for classroom learning. Teachers clearly enjoy teaching their subject and pupils generally learn well in lessons.

113. The department is well led by a very hard working, dedicated head of department, who has been in post for only five months. In that time he has introduced an effective, whole-school numeracy policy and changed the ethos of mathematics teaching in the school. Pupils are now taught towards the higher levels rather than the intermediate, and they are expected to

work hard and neatly at all times. He has sensibly introduced a greater emphasis on basic numeracy and is in the process of producing new schemes of work that will be more challenging for all pupils. There has also been an appropriate move to introduce more investigative work. These initiatives will undoubtedly result in higher standards in due course.

Numeracy

114. Pupils' standards of numeracy are generally poor on entry to the school. The school is rightly making a major effort to improve these across the curriculum. In mathematics lessons, teachers often start with a warm-up session of mental work and likewise often conclude a lesson with a mental arithmetic game. Pupils enjoy these activities and there is a marked improvement in numeracy in several subject areas. In geography, successful use is made of data handling and display in climatological graphs. In science, linear and non-linear graphs are plotted confidently. In art and in design and technology, accurate measurement is carried out and, in English, statistical analysis of the number of adjectives in sentences was used effectively to identify the author. In physical education, data handling techniques are used to analyse respiration efficiently and, in information technology, very successful use is made of statistical measures and data handling techniques. The school sensibly plans to carry on with its drive to improve standards of numeracy across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

115. Attainment in science is below the national average. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, attainment in the national tests was below the national average, although the performance was in line with similar schools. Boys achieved higher levels than girls by a small margin. From 1996 to 1998, attainment improved slightly, but fell again in 1999. However, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average. A comparison with performance at Key Stage 2 show that the school has achieved good progress with pupils, significantly above the national average, over Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs have made good progress as a result of the high quality support provided.

116. At the end of Key Stage 4, in 1999, GCSE performance was also below national average, and the proportion of pupils gaining A* - C grades in science was low. The average grade was below national average for both double and single award combined science. Boys achieved average grades higher than girls. The attainment is below that in similar schools. Analysis of average grades of pupils in comparison with their performance in Key Stage 3 indicates that progress was just satisfactory over Key Stage 4. In 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C was higher than in 1999, although at that time all were entered for double award.

117. Observation of work in the school, both in lessons and in written records, indicates that the standards of work at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 mirror the test or examination results and are below national expectations. In investigative and experimental work, pupils make good observations and record data neatly, but very few make progress with analysis and evaluation. Knowledge of main concepts in lessons is satisfactory, but proper

understanding and longer-term memory of facts are weak features. For example, Year 9 pupils, investigating the heat-insulating properties of materials, make good records of temperature and begin to analyse the data, but many are not clear about the physical process involved, or consider the accuracy of measurement.

118. Overall, pupils' attitudes to science are good. They enjoy practical work and are enthusiastic in the investigations, although they are less inclined towards written work. Behaviour is good. Pupils show respect for teachers and each other. Relationships are very positive, and good group collaboration is a notable feature. Good regard is paid to safety, for example, by readily wearing plastic safety glasses as appropriate. Pupils listen well, respond to questions, and follow instructions. They are inclined, however, to be reluctant to initiate questions or seek to extend their understanding of principles. Real interest in scientific ideas is often limited.

119. Teaching in the department is good. In over four fifths of lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was good and in the remainder it was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this well to present science in a clear and informative way. This interests pupils in science and helps them to understand the concepts involved and to make progress. Good reference is made to the development of literacy, through emphasising spelling, for example, and the frequent use of common scientific words. Development of numeracy is also effective when opportunities arise, in measurement and graph work, for example. Lessons are planned carefully, with thought given to progression from previous work, good use of homework, and some provision of varied work matched to the needs of pupils in the ability set. Pupils' behaviour is managed well, with good praise and support and good use of rewards to encourage pupils. There is a positive ethos of purposeful learning, with pupils willing and keen to succeed. Practical work is well organised, with resources and time being used efficiently.

120. Pupils' work is assessed regularly through module tests, but the effectiveness of monitoring progress within the lessons is unreliable. Questioning does not identify how well pupils really understand the concepts, and does not allow enough opportunity for evaluative discussion or reinforcement of learning. Marking of work is regular, but does not give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Information technology (IT) is being used well for data analysis and individual learning. Further development is planned.

121. Pupils with special educational needs learn satisfactorily. Good provision is made for their support. Learning Support Assistants are well deployed in a number of lessons where statemented children are present. Boys and girls make equally good progress and integrate well together at all ages.

122. The department is well led and managed and there is a strong commitment to high quality teaching and raising achievement by all science department staff. Assessment data are carefully analysed and increasingly used to identify underachievement and track the progress of individuals. Schemes of work are adequate. They are based on commercial packages, but these require further evaluation and adaptation to the pupils' specific needs. The work of the department is monitored satisfactorily.

123. Accommodation is bright and spacious, with good quality furniture and services. Secure arrangements have been made for the safe storage of chemicals and radioactive materials. Excellent displays of pupils' work and exemplars of standards enhance the environment for study. Learning resources are adequate but limited in quantity.

124. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have remained below national average. Attitudes of pupils have continued to be good. Progress across Key Stage 3 is now good, and across Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved considerably, with associated rigour and use of assessment. The curriculum is now secure and all previous health and safety concerns have been addressed.

ART

125. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is in line with national averages. All pupils have improved on their attainment on entry through following a well-planned course that develops their artistic techniques consistently and well. Their progress is also helped by the use of the effective self-assessment recently introduced into the department.

126. However, at the end of Key Stage 4, when pupils take their GCSE examination, the school's results are below national averages in comparison both with all schools and with similar schools. Examination results are showing an improvement. Within the school, pupils gain significantly better results in art than in other subjects in the curriculum.

127. Several features explain the relatively low performance at GCSE. Nationally, girls' results in art are better than boys'. In this school, boys predominate in all years. Poor attendance affects the completion of course work, but this is now being remedied by after-school and weekend classes.

128. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils experience a full range of art, craft and design work. In Year 8, pupils make very good progress in understanding and assimilating the aesthetic importance and influence of both multicultural and European art and design on their own work, but there is limited use of local art. One Year 8 brief required an artefact that demonstrated emotion in the form of a religious or celebratory piece. This work on masks effectively moved their two-dimensional designs towards a three-dimensional representation. Numeracy skills were practised effectively. Pupils produced a template working with symmetry in the design of a mask. In Year 9, pupils complete detailed observational drawings well. For example, they consider the made world around them and explore pattern, line and shape through very good observational sketches of their trainers. Later they confidently use their 'view finder' to zoom in on the part of their design they have chosen to develop. Much groundwork on pattern, sketching, colour and tone is impeded because of the lack of regular use of a sketchbook to record ideas and development, this is especially noticeable in the work of the boys.

129. During Key Stage 4, pupils complete their course at two levels. The GCSE examination is offered for the highest attainers and the Certificate of Achievement for those who would find GCSE too demanding. This allows all pupils to succeed, but the Certificate achievements are not included in the school's average points score. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good use of their work from the previous key stage. They consolidate their earlier learning, make effective use of self-evaluation and become constructively analytical of their own work. Girls

in particular make good contributions to whole-group discussion about techniques and presentation. Effective use of information technology at this level enhances pupils' attainment. For example, in a study on local architecture, use of SLR and digital cameras gave good support to class-based work. These pupils have also gained a deeper insight into interpretation through working with an artist in residence. This is a practice the school is continuing through involvement in a local media arts project. Year 10 has been inspired and captivated by the work of Rousseau, and working in his style has challenged pupils to produce dramatic pictures in pastel and paint as well as the excellent interpretation of natural form in their three-dimensional work.

130. All practical work has an element of creative inspiration, but presentation and research are generally weak from Key Stage 4 pupils. Limited research techniques and pupils' poor comprehension and reasoning skills, the result of literacy problems, make it difficult for pupils to answer written questions well, so they fail to back up the very good quality of their artistic realisation.

131. Pupils' attitude to art is good and is reflected in their willingness to evaluate one another's work and learn from mistakes. The enthusiastic take-up of the art club, mainly by girls, and of the catch-up classes to help Key Stage 4 complete their course work has a positive impact on the outcomes of final projects and pupils develop an intuitive approach to their work in art. Behaviour is excellent, and is characterised by self-discipline rather than imposed sanctions.

132. Teaching in art is always very good and has a positive impact on good pupil progress. Pupils' skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding are enriched by a participatory teaching style that puts the responsibility for learning firmly with the pupils. Good question and answer techniques elicit deeper understanding of subjects tackled, especially the background stories that put historical facts about artists into terms that pupils easily understand. Very good lesson planning ensures that techniques are well taught, often through demonstration, and then underpinned by consolidating discussion at the end of the lesson. There are rare occasions when opening discussion overruns and misses the opportunity to reinforce learning. Learning is inspired by the infectious enthusiasm shown in all aspects of teaching, and by discussion with pupils about their progress. This support, matched with the introduction of rigorous self-assessment, enables pupils to comment on their own progress and identify what they must do to improve. This feature is very strong in Years 7, 8 and 9, where pupils are using clear criteria to make personal judgements about the quality, productivity and pace of their work. Well-recorded assessment tracks pupil's progress.

133. Freedom of interpretation, which is encouraged in Key Stage 4, gives an interesting variety of outcomes in which pupils show pride. This freedom is more constrained in Key Stage 3. Pupil management is very good and teacher expectations of personal discipline ensure pupils make best use of the time available. A member of the administrative staff, qualified in art, gives additional support to specialist learning, by supporting the art club.

134. Management of art ensures that the department's profile is seen across the school and all pupils see their work displayed to advantage. An assistant head manages the department, alongside many other duties in the school. This situation, teamed with a lack of technical support, makes the day-to-day smooth running of the department very difficult. The room used for teaching art is enhanced by the work of the pupils, but regular leaks in the roof, a

crumbling structure and slippery worn steps into the building are a cause for concern. Pupils' work is often damaged as a result of the leaks and the steps make access to the building treacherous. Nevertheless there has been good improvement in art since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and of the course has improved. In the last inspection there was an absence of three-dimensional work and this is now in place.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 show that pupils are achieving below the national average, though the results are an improvement over previous years. The GCSE results for grades A* - C were below the national average in 1999 and below the pass rate for the rest of the subjects in the school. However, two areas of the design technology curriculum exceeded the school targets for A* - C passes, one by a significant margin.

136. The finding of the inspection is that attainment has risen since last year. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally. The department has begun to concentrate on developing skills and this has ensured the development of high standards in all areas of design and technology. Pupils have a good understanding of designing and ways of presenting their work to communicate their ideas for designs by the end of Year 9. Standards of technical skills are good. Pupils understand the working characteristics of a range of materials and how to use tools safely and accurately. The quality of finished products demonstrates an attention to detail, accuracy and precision. When making an animated toy, pupils fit their design to very specific needs, select suitable materials and use construction processes confidently and with some accuracy. In textiles, pupils' demonstrate excellent technical skills, contributing to high quality products, as seen, for example, in a project using the tie and dye process in the manufacture of 'T shirts'. In food technology, pupils develop their knowledge of healthy eating and are able to write a specification and prepare healthy meals. Pupils are able to make decisions about suitable ingredients and have an understanding of what constitutes a healthy balanced diet. They are developing their knowledge of simple electronic circuits well in the project on making an electronic game.

137. The evidence of pupils' design work and practical projects shows that attainment, by the end of Key Stage 4, is above national expectations in graphic communication, in line with expectations in food technology, but below in resistant materials and auto engineering. Current work with graphics and food technology is of a high standard and pupils pay particular attention to accuracy, quality of finish, appearance and consumer preference. In their design work, pupils have an understanding of construction techniques, but designs and the presentation of work are below what might be expected in some lessons. The sample of work seen from child development classes was satisfactory. In graphics lessons, pupils use computers well to develop drawing and design skills.

138. Pupils are making good progress overall as they move through the school. In Key Stage 3, almost all pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils enter in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are below average overall. In their early lessons, pupils make good progress in learning practical skills and the underlying theory through work on tasks that are precisely structured and have clear learning objectives for each

session. They have opportunities to solve problems, and work independently or in groups to develop their skills of investigation and research. The department emphasises good standards of graphical skills and presentation of work. By the end of Year 9, all pupils have experienced a range of activities in resistant materials, textiles, electronics, graphics and food technology. Boys and girls make equal progress.

139. In Key Stage 4 pupils are able to consolidate their learning satisfactorily and build on their design skills, their practical competence in solving more complex problems of design, and their knowledge of food preparation. They know how their work is assessed and quickly learn how to judge their standards and how to improve. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils, especially when extra support is provided in class.

140. The behaviour of pupils and their attitude to learning are always good. Pupils show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They listen attentively and watch carefully to understand what they must do, and show pride in their achievements. They respond well to teachers and are able to work without close supervision. They take responsibility for their areas of work and for organising their tasks.

141. Teaching throughout the department is always good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, and plan well to ensure that lessons have suitable pace. The lessons have clear, short-term objectives. Practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individuals pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. Work is sufficiently linked to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high and this encourages pupils to work hard and to improve their work. Learning objectives are clearly stated, so that pupils understand clearly what they have to do, and work is flexibly planned to provide for pupils' different levels of attainment and interests. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and teachers give helpful oral and written comments. Assessment concentrates upon tracking experiences and outcomes and is used to show teachers what pupils need to do to improve their work. Targets are set for pupils and they respond well to these. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons. There is a good level of resources to teach all aspects of design and technology. The teachers give freely of their time to support pupils after school.

142. Design and technology is managed and organised well. A good policy and scheme of work cover all aspects of the programme of study. The department handbook sets out aims and objectives, reflecting the policies, aims and objectives of the school. The document provides clear guidance for the department. There are frequent department meetings with agendas and minutes. The leadership and management of the two areas give a clear vision and direction, leading to effective strategies to promote curricular improvements. The department has identified appropriate priorities, takes the necessary action and reviews the progress. There is a shared commitment for improvement combined with the capacity and determination to succeed. Curriculum time at both key stages is good. Funding for the curriculum is satisfactory. There are no risk assessments carried out at present. The display of pupils' work needs to be improved to provide stimulus and interest. Accommodation is generous and there is a good level of tools, resources and equipment available, including access to computers.

GEOGRAPHY

143. The majority of pupils taking geography in Years 10 and 11 have lower levels of prior attainment than in most other schools. As a result, standards achieved in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 are well below those achieved nationally. Although the number of pupils awarded grades A* to C has been well below the national averages in the last three years, there are variations. In 1997 only 8.7 per cent of candidates were awarded grades A* to C; this rose to 37 per cent in 1998, but fell to 13.6 per cent in 1999. In the last two years, the percentage of pupils awarded grades A* to G has been much closer to the national average and was particularly good in 1998, when all pupils taking geography achieved a grade within this range. Despite fluctuations, the attainment of pupils in public examinations is rising overall and pupils are achieving better results in geography than in some other subjects in the school.

144. By the end of Year 9, at the age of 14, standards of attainment in geography are close to, but still below, the average of those achieved by all other pupils nationally. Overall they are rising, with a higher percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 of the National Curriculum each year. Pupils in Year 7, for example, have a good knowledge of the factors that influence the sites of settlements. In Year 8 they understand the reasons for the decline of industry in South Wales and why newer, different industries are being attracted to the area. Pupils in Year 9 fully grasp the reasons for the establishment of National Parks; appreciate the conflicts generated between different interest groups over the use of land, and can locate the parks accurately in different parts of England and Wales.

145. During lessons, the quality of pupils' learning is often good. This is because they concentrate throughout the lesson and work well together when asked to do so in groups or in pairs. Relationships in the classroom are good. Pupils are able to extract information from textbooks and other material to provide answers to the tasks set or to answer questions either orally or in written form. Learning is particularly good when pupils are involved in practical work, such as simulation exercises on the siting of a Saxon settlement, the construction of models, and the use of information from the school's weather station to understand the difference between weather and climate. Skills of recording and analysis are strengthened by very good use of information communication technology by pupils in all years, but especially in the production of coursework for GCSE examinations. Fieldwork activities, which are undertaken both locally and further afield, are strengths of the department and promote learning of good quality. Although many pupils are able to remember and recall information learned last week or last month, few are able to retain information over longer periods and, partly because of literacy problems, are not able to respond well in formal tests and examinations.

146. Teaching, which is always satisfactory and often good, helps pupils to learn by using a variety of methods and materials, including artefacts, audio-visual materials and information technology, in lessons. The variety of approaches helps to sustain pupils' interest and concentration. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are catered for with the support of classroom learning assistants, who are kept fully informed of the contents of lessons and are therefore able to help these pupils make generally satisfactory progress. A brisk pace in most lessons enhances learning, which is also enlivened by the enthusiasm of the teacher for the subject and good time management. Homework, which is regularly set, is well used to enhance the learning that takes place in lessons and the department makes a good

contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Good, though not always planned, use is made of opportunities in geography to promote the development of pupils' spiritual awareness through the study of landscape, natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes and weather, and also to promote understanding of the moral and social issues that surround deforestation and the movement of population. Contributions are made to the understanding of cultural differences between peoples in regional studies such as that of Kenya.

147. The teaching of geography is well managed by an enthusiastic and experienced practitioner, who, despite many other commitments in the school, ensures that there is regular assessment of the progress of pupils and targets for the future are set. Teaching is monitored and the scheme of work, which meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum, is helpful to non-specialist teachers. The department has a good and varied supply of resources for teaching, including audio-visual material, CD-ROMs, maps and texts, which include books specifically designed for pupils with special educational needs. The spacious, geography room has very good displays of pupils' work to stimulate learning, but the need to teach some lessons in other parts of the building limits the use of some resources. Development planning is in place but is not sufficiently focused on raising levels of attainment or the introduction of the new National Curriculum.

148. Much has improved in the department since the last inspection. The pace of the majority of lessons is good, a greater variety of methods is used in teaching, and pupils are more actively involved in learning. There is less teaching by non-specialist teachers and a much wider range of resources. Attainment, however, has not risen sufficiently, partly because pupils' levels of prior attainment and literacy remain low, and partly because not sufficient attention is given to reinforcing principles and basic concepts so that pupils can work things out when tested rather than just relying on remembering information.

HISTORY

149. Problems in the provision of history teaching in the school since the last inspection have prevented any improvement in the attainment of pupils in history. With the exception of the current Year 11, no pupils have chosen to take history as a subject in Key Stage 4 in recent years. As a result there is insufficient information on which to judge the attainment of pupils at the age of 16. During the inspection only a very limited amount of coursework was available and no lesson observation was possible, as there was no history teaching in Years 10 or 11.

150. By the end of Key Stage 3, at the age of 14, attainment in history is below that expected nationally, with most pupils reaching, at best, Level 4 of the National Curriculum. Levels of attainment, particularly as indicated by the scrutiny of a limited amount of pupils' written work, decline over the key stage. The majority of pupils have difficulty recalling information learned in previous years, or even some months ago, with any degree of accuracy. Their low levels of prior attainment do not equip them to make sufficient progress over longer periods of time. During lessons, however, attainment is satisfactory. Pupils are able to extract information from textbooks to provide answers to questions and tasks set by the teacher. They make comparisons and give reasons for the differences between the ways of life of woodland and plains Indians in North America, and work out the sequence of events and reasons for the murder of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. They have a reasonable

sense of chronology, and when prompted, are able to place historical events in order and know the events taking place in different continents in the same period. In the short term they are able to link causes and effects. In Year 9, for example, pupils understand how and why Germany was 'appeased' prior to the Second World War.

151. Levels of attainment and the quality of pupils' learning are depressed further by the lack of sustained written work in the subject. In this respect there has been no overall improvement since the previous inspection. Although pupils are able to extract appropriate information from textbooks to respond well to probing questions from the teacher, there are too few opportunities to consolidate or record their knowledge for future occasions. Learning is enhanced by the ability of pupils to concentrate for the whole lesson and to respond to questions willingly for long periods. Although the requirements of the National Curriculum are met in Key Stage 3, the choice of topics to illustrate the units of study is not always sufficiently focused on some of the main events, people or changes. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding are limited and often patchy. Some major events, such as the First World War, are relegated to just one page of recorded information in pupils' exercise books.

152. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but often uninspiring, and relies too much on a very limited number of approaches or methods. Teaching was enlivened when pupils were asked to act out historical events in the lesson on Thomas à Becket. Class management is sound and there are good relationships between teacher and pupils. Few records are kept of pupils' progress or attainment and there is no evidence of marking or target setting in current history teaching. Practical work, especially fieldwork in the local community and the use of information technology, does not form a part of the work of the department or of teaching. Homework is, however, regularly set and arises out of the work done in lessons.

153. The quality and the management of the teaching of history remain unsatisfactory and show no improvement on the situation reported at the last inspection. Although the school has made a serious effort to improve the position, the steps taken have proved unsuccessful. Schemes of work are inadequate; pupils' work is not regularly assessed or tested; there is no record of pupils' attainments, and no targets are set for future work. Pupils are not choosing, or encouraged, to take the subject in Years 10 and 11, and currently, no attempt is being made to raise levels of attainment. Development planning, though in place, fails to address the issues of attainment, the lack of history in Key Stage 4 and inadequate schemes of work. There are now sufficient, appropriate textbooks for teaching, but the department still lacks audio-visual materials and artefacts.

154. The school is taking steps to tackle the problems of the history department as soon as possible, and a new appointment has been made.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

155. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 for 1999 show that the attainment of the majority of pupils is above the standard expected nationally, and also show an improvement over the previous years. There are no GCSE results in 1999 for information communication technology at the end of Key Stage 4. National Curriculum levels and a statement of competence are recorded in pupils' records of achievement.

156. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in the information communication technology lessons is above average; this is reflected in both the work seen during lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' previous work. Pupils are demonstrating good skills in word processing and these help them to improve their spelling and presentation of their work. They understand how to create, alter and combine text and images using desktop publishing in, for example, English, geography and graphics lessons. Pupils know about the use of databases and how they are constructed to store and retrieve information. They are familiar with spreadsheets to organise information, and with the simple use of formulae to make calculations. Pupils attain good standards of performance in handling information and data. They use computers for writing simple procedures to construct geometrical shapes in mathematics lessons. .

157. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in information communication technology is of the expected standard. Pupils are confident enough to work independently, using a range of software. They apply their skills to solve more complex problems, mainly in handling information and data. The higher attaining pupils understand and use applications to organise, refine and present information for different purposes and produce quality results. For example, in Year 10, pupils have the opportunity to develop their projects using scanned images, a digital camera and desk top publishing. In graphics lessons, they are confident when using a drawing program to produce different views of objects. They are able to discuss their work with confidence, solve problems and come to reasonable conclusions when given a task to complete. The presentation of work is of a high standard.

158. In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress in their knowledge of, and application of skills in, information communication technology. There are adequate opportunities for pupils to use computers and practise these skills in other subjects. This helps their progress. The pupils make good progress through a range of opportunities to develop the higher aspects of information handling, modelling, desktop publishing, use of a database and computer-aided drawing. The use of computer control systems is not developed in design technology as specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study. There is access to the internet and a CD ROM library for pupils.

159. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave very well in lessons. They treat equipment with care and work hard to master new skills. All lessons include much independent work, which pupils enjoy as their confidence grows. Pupils turn up promptly for lessons and are prepared to use their own time to complete work. They are co-operative and responsive, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, read the guidance material thoroughly, and try to work accurately. They enjoy discussions about their work, set themselves suitable targets to achieve, and try to meet them.

160. There are examples of very competent teaching in lessons. Good teaching in both key stages contributes significantly to pupils' acquisition of subject knowledge and skills. The

lessons are planned to a high standard and have suitable challenge. The management of classes is good. Clear targets are set for pupils of similar levels of attainment. This careful matching of work motivates pupils and maintains their interest. This aspect has improved since the last inspection. Relationships are very good and the skilled support given to pupils in their work quickly builds their confidence.

161. The department has responded well to the last inspection and improvements made include an increased challenge in the work set for pupils. Good professional training has been provided for staff. Opportunities for the consistent application and development of information technology are well planned across the curriculum. This ensures that skills are developed consistently and progressively across many subject areas, and helps pupils to make rapid progress. Technical support is good and subject teachers are confident to use the network. The number of computers available is above what might be expected nationally. Subject teachers use the school network and the computers available in the library well to reinforce learning across the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to use computers after school and members of staff are available to support them.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

162. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved in French over the last three years. The results of teachers' assessments in 1999 were in line with national expectations, although the proportion of pupils attaining levels four and above was well below national averages. Attainment in observed lessons confirms this assessment and shows a further improvement for the current end of key stage pupils. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' attainment, but not more so than occurs nationally.

163. All pupils make good progress relative to their ability in Year 7. They do not sustain this rate of progress in Year 8. However, progress improves in Year 9 and, by the end of the key stage, all pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when they are supported, as in a Year 9 class. Here two pupils had the confidence to respond in French to their teacher's questions about leisure and clubs due to the preparation work done discretely with them by their learning assistant. All pupils have a good understanding of the spoken word because they are used to hearing French as the normal language for communication in class. Higher and average attaining pupils are using key words well to pick up the general meaning of longer passages of taped material. Most pupils lack confidence when speaking French and their pronunciation is generally poor. They make no attempt to use French spontaneously around the classroom despite the fact they hear it so regularly. Their short-term recall of single words and phrases is good, but they do not retain material well in the longer term and lack the ability to string words and phrases into longer sentences naturally. Even in Year 9, higher attaining pupils have difficulty in sustaining a simple, routine dialogue with each other on what they are currently learning.

164. All pupils understand the written word, although their experience of reading does not extend beyond simple work sheets and their course book. From Year 7 onwards, pupils attempt to write some French of their own in the form of short letters and class surveys. Their work is careless. Good use is made of information technology to encourage pupils to take pride in the presentation in this work, but their redrafted work still contains many of the basic

inaccuracies of their first versions. By Year 9, good progress has been made in writing, especially with higher attaining pupils who can write simply, but correctly, on past holidays and future aspirations.

165. At Key Stage 4 standards of attainment have improved in the last three years. Although remaining well below national averages, the number of pupils gaining A*-C passes in the GCSE examinations in 1999 showed a significant improvement on the previous two years. All pupils who were entered gained an A*-G pass. Pupils attained higher standards in French in comparison to their other subjects than pupils nationally. The proportion of the current Year 11 entered for GCSE examinations has increased. Work observed during the inspection showed higher attaining pupils had made good progress and average and lower attaining pupils, satisfactory progress. In Year 10, however, average attaining pupils are underachieving. As at Key Stage 3, pupils still lack confidence to speak. They are hesitant and their pronunciation remains poor. However, when pushed hard, as in a Year 10 lesson, they can sustain a simple conversation with their teacher about their life at school. By Year 11, pupils are using key words well in longer passages of reading to deduce meaning, but they lack the skill of using simple contextual clues to help them understand. Poor recall of previously learnt material also hinders their comprehension. They take great pride in their pieces of written coursework. They have produced some attractive brochures about Grantham using information and communication technology. However, their grasp of basic grammar is poor and they use only a limited range of idiom and vocabulary.

166. All teaching across both key stages was at least satisfactory and it is satisfactory overall. In one third of classes it was good or very good; these were mainly at Key Stage 4. Teachers are effective managers of pupils. As a result, classrooms are well-ordered places where the atmosphere is conducive to learning. Pupils show interest in what they are doing and work well in pairs, groups and individually. This was particularly the case where a group of Year 7 pupils worked on re-writing a letter of thanks using computers. They sorted the overall design of their work, added pictures and printed their work with minimal recourse to their teacher for support. Pupils learn most effectively when lessons are well planned so that they are conducted at a brisk pace and cover all four skill areas with a suitable range of tasks graded to meet the needs of all abilities. The purpose of the lesson is explained clearly to pupils at the beginning and reinforced at the end. Material is thoroughly consolidated to give pupils confidence before the next task is attempted. Learning is less effective when this consolidation does not take place or the nature of the task is inappropriate to the needs of the pupils. Work is marked regularly and graded, so that pupils know what standards they have achieved and are advised what they must do to progress. However, at Key Stage 3 in particular, too many basic errors are allowed to persist, even when work is redrafted. Good quality homework is set and checked regularly. Teachers pay satisfactory attention to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although problems with basic literacy skills still depress attainment. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are each practised in most lessons. Surveys are conducted and converted to bar graphs before being written up in French. Simple mental calculation is exploited whenever the occasion allows as, for example, in a Year 7 lesson on buying presents. Pupils have regular access to computers to help them with the presentation of their written work.

167. The close working relationship of the two subject specialists, one of whom is a French native speaker, makes a valuable contribution to pupils' development in the language. All pupils' work is moderated and assessment is beginning to be used effectively to evaluate and

improve curricular provision. The effective monitoring of teaching is starting to improve standards of attainment.

168. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have improved significantly at both key stages. All pupils now follow an appropriate five year course leading either to GCSE or the Certificate of Achievement. Listening skills have been developed with the regular use of French for all routine classroom business. Pupils have access to information technology and other audio and visual facilities. The subject is adequately resourced.

MUSIC

169. The pupils' attainment is well below national standards on entry to the school. Overall, it is in line with national standards by the ends of both key stages. Because of recent instability in the staffing of the department, there is no information available on National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3. There is no significant difference between the attainments of boys and girls.

170. In Key Stage 3, pupils know and understand fundamental concepts and some technical terms, such as 'chord', 'ostinato' and 'riff'. They can identify instruments and understand musical structures. When performing, pupils sustain simple rhythms steadily and can read and understand basic traditional notation. They can follow a conductor's beat and vary dynamics according to visual commands. On keyboards, the pupils' awkward hand positions impede their progress. Taking into account work in folders, audio tapes and observation, achievement and progress are satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Examination work is neatly presented and folders well cared for. Compositions, although simple, show an understanding of melody, harmony and structure, and pupils have a working knowledge of traditional notation. Overall, knowledge is sound, but it becomes insecure when tested under examination conditions, partly because of limited literacy skills. Knowledge and understanding of style and genre are weak.

171. The teaching is good overall in Key Stage 3, with some very good lessons. Planning is competent. An effective scheme of work has been drawn together by the new head of department where none existed six months ago. Units of work and individual lessons cover an appropriate breadth and variety of musical activities, and are in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum. The pace of the teaching is swift and the approach lively. The pupils enjoy the sense of challenge that this brings and respond with added effort and concentration. Occasionally pupils are not allowed sufficient time to absorb what they have learned, and not enough strategies are used to ascertain the thoroughness of their understanding. At the beginnings of classes, the clear summaries of previous lessons raise the pupils' awareness of the context of their learning. The teacher's use of a range of techniques involves pupils of all abilities. The reinforcement of basic skills on keyboards supports pupils' learning of notation and their understanding of key concepts, such as 'dynamics'. Very good summaries at the ends of lessons and the setting of relevant homework support learning still further.

172. In Key Stage 4, the teaching is good. There is currently no GCSE music in Year 10. The curriculum is well organised; activities accord well with examination requirements. The pupils are well known by their teacher. Even though she has not been in post long, her detailed knowledge of their abilities enables her to lend support where it is most needed. The pupils respond to this with respect and effort; pertinent questions are asked and thoughtful answers given. The relationship between teacher and pupils is cordial.

173. The pupils' response to music is very good overall at both key stages, and sometimes excellent. They are very well behaved and respectful in class; there is a sense of enjoyment in the lessons. Concentration is generally good across the whole range of abilities. Pupils are able to work well in pairs and individually; they are keen to please, and respond well to praise and encouragement. Where the response is excellent, pupils take pride in their achievements and discuss their work with maturity and interest.

174. Extra-curricular activities are being introduced and are successful. A keyboard club is well attended and a choir meets regularly. Performances are planned. The current head of department has made extraordinary progress in a very short time. When she was appointed in September 1999, there were no schemes of work, no assessment, and no means of recording pupils' progress. All this documentation is now in place. As well as attending to the outcomes of individual lessons, which it does well, the department should now aim to develop the quality and thoroughness of the pupils' learning over time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

175. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils attain levels that are in line with national expectations. In athletics they understand how to use equipment and space safely. Most pupils, when throwing the javelin and putting the shot, understand the techniques involved but lack consistency in their performance. When playing rounders, boys and girls select and combine good fielding and tactical skills. They play with energy and enthusiasm and work well together, supporting other players in their team. In Year 7, pupils have a good understanding of effective running techniques and are able to exchange relay batons efficiently. Pupils are not sufficiently perceptive in their observations of others and do not yet use this information to improve their own performance. Almost all pupils are reasonably fit and know how to warm up and stretch independently.

176. In the 1998 GCSE examinations, pupils achieved 14 per cent A*-C grades. In 1999, eight pupils entered the examination and 88 per cent achieved A*-C grades. These results are very well above the national average of 50 per cent and are better than all other subjects taken in the school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are attaining well in the practical aspects of the GCSE course. They have a good knowledge of health, fitness and the rules relating to games and athletic activities. Around 70 per cent of Year 11 pupils have attained above average grades in their GCSE practical activities. Over half the pupils are hindered in the theoretical aspects of the course by low level literacy skills, but their files are neatly presented and well organised.

177. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not take the GCSE examination because it is an optional examination subject. Overall they are attaining at a level that is expected nationally. A few pupils attain above this level in football and netball, where they play for house, school and regional teams. Pupils are able to perform a variety of strength, stamina and flexibility exercises and use their pulse rates to monitor their own fitness.

178. The quality of teaching is never less than good, with two thirds of lessons being very good. Teaching is stronger at Key Stage 3, where it is very good overall, and six out of seven lessons are very good. Learning is good overall, and in two thirds of lessons pupils make very good progress. Teachers have very good subject expertise. They give appropriate demonstrations and handle pupils' responses effectively. This gives the pupils a clear idea of performance techniques and enables them to improve their skills. Pupils in Year 7 come to the school with little or no knowledge of health related fitness and continuous rounders. They quickly acquire the new skills involved and increase their knowledge and understanding. Relationships with pupils are very good. This enables teachers to manage their classes easily and effectively. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic, and their attitudes are very good, allowing much learning to take place. All lessons provide opportunities for pupils to extend their health and fitness and to show independence in their participation in this element of the National Curriculum. Teachers review and reinforce previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the pupils. This is a particularly successful strategy with the lower attaining pupils who often need to refine and revisit existing skills before progress can be made. At both key stages, pupils of different attainment levels, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This is because the carefully focused questions and tasks, set by teachers and supported by learning assistants, provide appropriate challenge for all.

179. The department focuses on developing literacy and numeracy skills by using analytical worksheets and displaying key words. This is not extended sufficiently to encompass speaking, spelling and reading skills and in turn does not provide a base for the theoretical aspects of the GCSE examination. A few lessons are very performance based and opportunities are missed for pupils to look at and evaluate their own work and that of others. However, the department is developing strategies that will encourage pupils to make more oral and written contributions in each lesson. The use of additional sources of reference in the form of prompt sheets or work cards would promote this aspect of the National Curriculum more fully.

180. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, games activities dominate the programme at both key stages and there is insufficient development of outdoor and adventurous activities, because this programme of study is only taught in Year 7. All teaching groups are mixed gender and mixed ability and provide very good equal opportunities for both boys and girls. The extra-curricular provision, including visits to watch competitive events and the wide use of group and pair work, makes a very good contribution to the pupils' social and moral development.

181. The good leadership of the department has successfully addressed the issues from the previous inspection, but would be more effective if teaching were regularly monitored. Documentation is thorough. Good assessment procedures are established and reflect the new National Curriculum levels. Further development, linking assessment criteria to the units of work, is needed to provide realistic targets for pupils. The introduction of GCSE

examinations has been a successful initiative. The attainment of pupils at both key stages has improved. Opportunities are now regularly provided to enable pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. The curriculum has been reviewed to provide equal access to all areas for all pupils. The two members of the department are dedicated, work well together, and are continually striving to improve standards further. The indoor accommodation remains inadequate. It prevents the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum at Key Stage 3, necessitates extensive use of offsite facilities at Key Stage 4, and limits the progress of pupils in their planned activity when the weather is inclement.