

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Slough Berkshire

LEA area: Slough

Unique reference number: 110087

Headteacher: Mr Joe Carvill

Reporting inspector: Mr Ken Madrell
4317

Dates of inspection: 29th January – 1st February 2001

Inspection number: 212031

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shaggy Calf Lane Slough Berkshire
Postcode:	SL2 5HW
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Frank Shephard
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector		How high are standards? How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1258	Helen Silverstone	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Special educational needs English as an Additional Language	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	English	
5241	Chris Corp	Team inspector	Science	
12721	David Riddle	Team inspector	Design and Technology Information Technology	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	[]
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	[]
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	[]
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	[]
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	[]
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	[]
[OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES]	[]
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	[]
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	[]

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's Catholic High School is a modern school that stands within a local education authority where 11+ selection still exists and approximately 37 per cent of pupils enter grammar schools. Pupils who enter St. Joseph's, an over subscribed school, may or may not have been included in this selection process by their parents. There are 591 pupils on roll between the ages of 11 and 16 years. This is a slight increase on the number who were at the school at the time of the previous inspection. There are equal numbers of boys and girls at Key Stage 3, but at Key Stage 4 girls outnumber the boys by about 10 per cent. The proportion of Catholic pupils is about 80 per cent. One hundred pupils are on the register of special educational needs. This number is below the national average. Eleven pupils have statements of special educational need and this is broadly in line with the average. For most of the pupils at the higher stages of the Code of Practice the nature of their special educational needs is either emotional and behavioural difficulties, or specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language and/or who may experience another language at home is about 20 per cent. This is above the national average. Punjabi is the most common home language other than English. Only about 15 per cent of pupils are of Black Caribbean, African or Asian heritage and many of the additional language speakers are of white European heritage. About 14 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is broadly in line with the average. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Joseph's Catholic High School is an effective school. The previously designated serious weaknesses in science no longer apply. The headteacher provides sound leadership. He leads by example in promoting a calm and caring atmosphere. He is well supported by the two deputy headteachers and other members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The governing body is supportive and is actively involved with the school. Overall, subject standards in the school are rising. Teaching is good at all stages and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Although expenditure per pupil is above average the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching helps pupils learn.
- There is a shared commitment to improvement.
- The atmosphere of the school is caring and supportive.
- The management and teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school promotes good pupil attitudes and relationships.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by extra activities and visits.

What could be improved

- Continue to raise levels of pupils' attainment, especially in English.
- Pupils' attendance.
- There is inconsistency in the co-ordination and review of some school activities.
- Whole-school and departmental planning is unsatisfactory in terms of identifying financial resources.
- Target setting with pupils to give them clear guidance on how to improve is unsatisfactory and needs to be further developed.
- Comply with statutory requirements for delivery and reporting of information and communication technology at Key Stage 4.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement in the short period of time since the last inspection in March 1999. Attainment levels have risen, the quality of teaching has improved and leadership and management have been strengthened. Management, which responded favourably to the last report, retains the capacity for further improvement. The school has made good progress with addressing the serious weaknesses in science, which now no longer exist. A new head of department has been

appointed, who is providing very good leadership and management. The school is making very good progress with the key issue related to information technology. A newly appointed deputy headteacher is providing good leadership to the staff. Statutory requirements are now met at Key Stage 3 and plans are in place to address the non-compliance and reporting of information and communication technology at Key Stage 4. Satisfactory progress has been made with developing the use of assessment data to raise attainment. Previous weaknesses with reports have been addressed and the quality and use of individual education plans have been improved. In science and mathematics, good progress has been made with developing systems of assessment. Good progress has been made with reviewing the work of subject departments, and appointments of heads of department have also been made in art and mathematics.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	E	D	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Because of the selection processes within the local education authority, most pupils enter the school at levels below the national average in English, mathematics and science. At the age of 14, pupils are close to the national average in English, but are below in mathematics and well below in science. However, by the age of 16, standards remain well below the national average. Although standards in physical education and music were above average, in other subjects they were at or below average. The school met the targets it set for GCSE performance in 2000. Across the broader range of GCSE passes at grades A*-G the school does well. The numbers of pupils gaining five or more passes were in line with all schools, and 100 per cent of pupils gained at least one GCSE pass at grades A*-G; this places the school well above average. At GCSE pupils do well in English literature and expressive arts. In nearly all subjects there are improvements across both key stages. However, because of weak teaching there is a downward trend in GCSE results in English language. Overall, the work seen across subjects during the inspection demonstrated that pupils were making appropriate progress. However, progress over the longer term is less secure because absence rates are high. Good teaching ensures that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Across Key Stage 3 boys are achieving at lower levels than girls, but across Key Stage 4 they do better than girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are good. One of the strengths of the school is its promotion of good attitudes amongst the pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Behaviour around school is satisfactory. There is little bullying and when it does occur the school has proper procedures to deal with it.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. Good relationships are a strength of the schools.
Attendance	Although the school works extremely hard to improve attendance, rates remain poor.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/a

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.

There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and it is now a strength of the school. In 96 per cent of lessons observed, it was satisfactory or better and in 25 per cent it was very good or excellent. The strengths are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, the effectiveness of their planning and the use of homework. In English, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, but in some lessons unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Although the school is finding it very difficult to fill vacancies in mathematics, all teaching was at least satisfactory and some was good and very good. In science, there has been a big improvement in the quality of teaching and although some remains unsatisfactory, over 30 per cent of lessons observed were good or very good. In physical education, the quality of teaching is very good. In all other subjects, it is good. Overall, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, is good. The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum at both key stages is generally broad and quite well balanced. At Key Stage 4 statutory requirements for information and communication technology are not met. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is good leadership and management and the quality of teaching is good. Individual education plans have improved in quality and are used well by teachers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Some pupils for whom English is an additional language get support from a teacher funded through a specific grant.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare. Staff know their pupils well. There are good arrangements for promoting behaviour and attendance. Those for monitoring progress and academic achievement are satisfactory. Arrangements for pupils' care are unsatisfactory because of a number of relatively minor but significant issues resulting from the unsatisfactory conditions of the grounds and parts of the building.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school and the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents recognise and applaud the school's strengths, particularly the way it is led and managed and the high expectations that it has for the pupils. A number expressed concern about the use of homework and the manner in which the school works with parents. Except in mathematics, these worries are unjustified. The disquiet expressed by a minority of parents about conduct reflects the unsatisfactory behaviour of a very few pupils. The school almost always ensures that this behaviour does not affect the overall progress that pupils make in the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides sound leadership to the staff and pupils of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Members of the governing body are committed and work hard to support the school. The governors discharge their responsibilities as critical friends and are developing an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body has some involvement with planning and formulating a strategic view for the school, but it needs to be more proactive. Governors fulfil statutory requirements except those for information and communication technology.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has developed good systems to monitor and evaluate teaching. Some areas of the school's work need more co-ordination and more rigorous evaluation.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its resources effectively and efficiently. There are good systems of financial management and control. The school has begun to adopt the principles of best value. Resources need to be more accurately identified in planning. With the exception of mathematics, staffing is well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Accommodation and learning resources are used satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Questionnaires were issued to parents of all pupils in the school. A total of 27 per cent were returned and analysed. A meeting was held for parents. Twenty-five parents attended.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and standards in French. Management and teaching of pupils with special educational needs. An emphasis on promoting good attendance and punctuality. Teachers who know the pupils and give them good support. Out of school activities and trips. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The appointment of permanent teachers for mathematics. Marking, especially in mathematics. More consistency with setting homework. More pupils being stretched.

The inspection findings support the positive views held by parents about the school. The governors are working hard to appoint permanent mathematics teachers. Evidence collected showed that in most cases suitable homework was set. In some lessons, inspectors did observe that more-able pupils sometimes had work that was too easy.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Because of the selection process within the local authority pupils who enter at age 11 have attainment levels below average. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3, but attainment levels remain below the national average. By the age of 16 pupils are attaining levels at or above the national average across the broader GCSE grades of A*-G. However, across the higher grades of A*-C and in terms of the average points scores, pupils' attainment levels are well below the national average. Overall there has been a steady improvement in levels of attainment over recent years, which is broadly in line with the national trend.
2. In September 2000, the proportion of pupils entering with Level 4 and above in the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the age of 11 was below average. The selection process has an even more marked effect on the absence of higher-attaining pupils. In English, mathematics and science, only about 10 per cent of pupils were at Level 5 and above compared to between 33 per cent and 25 per cent nationally.
3. In the 2000 national tests at the age of 14, standards were below the average for all schools. Standards were also below those of the schools with pupils of similar background. In English, attainment levels were in line with the national average. Performance in mathematics and science is improving, but levels in mathematics remain below the national average and in science they are well below. Compared to similar schools, attainment levels in English are in line, but again in mathematics they are below and in science well below. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher level, grade 6 and above, are well below the national average and those of similar schools in all three subjects. Since the previous inspection standards have risen in mathematics and science, but in the current year they have fallen slightly in English.
4. The 2000 statutory teacher assessments in other subjects at the age of 14 show that overall standards were below the national average. Standards in music and physical education were above average; standards in history were in line with the national average and in French they were just below. In geography and art they were below, and in design and technology and information technology they were well below.
5. By the age of 16 pupils do better than those in similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining at least one A*-G pass is very high. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at A*-G grades is in line with such schools. However, in terms of the higher A*-C grades, and the average points score, results are still well below average. Since the previous inspection there has been a big increase in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades. The school has maintained an excellent record of securing at least one GCSE pass at grade G or above for all its pupils.
6. In English, the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades has fallen since the previous inspection and is below those of all modern schools nationally and those non-selective schools in the local education authority. Although beset with staffing difficulties, results in mathematics have improved. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades, although below those of other modern schools, is in line with the non-selective schools in the local education authority. In science, results are improving from a very low base. However, they remain below those in other modern schools and those in the non-selective schools in the local education authority.

7. Pupils do very well at GCSE in expressive arts and English literature. Results in most other subjects are close to or below the average for modern schools. In such subjects, option groups are often small and pupil numbers vary considerably year-on-year. Within the context of the school's own results pupils do well at GCSE in business studies, French, geography, history and design and technology. Pupils do less well at GCSE in art and design, physical education and religious education. Although much of the work seen was well presented, incomplete work and work missed through absence are barriers to progress.
8. The governors set challenging, but realistic targets for the 2000 GCSE examinations. The targets were met for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more passes at grades A*-C and for those gaining one or more passes at grades A*-G. However, the target was not met for the average points score.
9. Good teaching and curriculum planning support pupils' progress well. Taken as a whole, in work seen during the inspection, about seven out of 10 pupils were working at levels close to the national average. The proportion of such pupils was higher at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 3, work seen was good in French, history, physical education and music. It was satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, geography, design and technology, art and information communication technology. At Key Stage 4, it was satisfactory in mathematics, science, French, history, geography, design and technology and physical education. Work seen was unsatisfactory in English, science, art and information communication technology. Although much of the work seen was well presented, incomplete work and work missed through absence are barriers to progress.
10. Pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory. There is satisfactory progress with literacy skills as pupils move through the school. There are no major weaknesses with pupils' speaking and listening skills. In English, they have improved since the previous inspection because teachers have given more emphasis to this in lessons. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in drama. In science, higher-attaining pupils at Key Stage 4 use spoken language effectively to describe their work. In science, history, geography and art pupils are well supported with their acquisition of technical language. In art, pupils demonstrate good speaking skills when evaluating and describing their work. Reading skills are satisfactory across all subjects and pupils with special educational needs make good progress with the development of their reading. Standards in writing are satisfactory across the school. However, in geography whilst pupils' descriptive writing is good, the quality of explanation and detail is weaker. In history, more-able pupils at Key Stage 4 can produce sustained, detailed and analytical writing, but other pupils' writing is weaker in terms of interpretation. Pupils in French develop accurate writing and older pupils use and apply grammar well.
11. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory. Mental arithmetic skills are reinforced in mathematics lessons and there is no over reliance on electronic calculators, although their efficient use is taught as part of the curriculum. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 can calculate percentage parts of quantities and display good levels of mental calculation. Graph drawing and interpretation skills are very evident in science, design technology, geography and information technology. In science, at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils regularly use their graphical interpretation and data handling skills when undertaking their practical work, analysing results and making conclusions. They can also tabulate information and work out results of experiments. Population statistics form the basis of good numerical work in geography at Key Stage 4. Year 7 girls were measuring flexibility during physical education and were using positive and negative values with accuracy.

12. Recent improvements in the availability of information and communication technology and pupils' access to it are benefiting the development of pupils' use and understanding. Information and communication technology is best at Key Stage 3 where pupils were seen to be competent in their use of handling and communicating information. Examples of the confident use of data logging and spreadsheets were seen in science and mathematics. Control technology is being developed in design and technology. At Key Stage 4, pupils' use of information and communication technology is well developed in business studies, a popular subject taken by many pupils, and in the newly established information technology GCSE course. Other opportunities for pupils to develop the use and application of information and communication knowledge are more limited and restrict progress.
13. Across Key Stage 3 boys achieve at lower levels than girls, but across Key Stage 4 this situation is reversed. At Key Stage 3, there was a very wide variation in art with 90 per cent of girls reaching the national expectation compared to under 40 per cent of boys. There was also a wide variation in music with nearly 90 per cent of girls achieving the national expectation compared to only 60 per cent of boys. Since the last inspection the performance of boys at Key Stage 4 has improved dramatically, but that of girls has fallen. Some teaching of single sex groups has been piloted in English and the humanities, but these have not yet been evaluated. The school has begun to analyse performance in terms of gender, but needs to make more use of this analysis in terms of identifying under-achieving groups and developing strategies to raise achievement.
14. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the quality and use of individual education plans. Such plans are now used by all teachers, enabling the specific needs of the pupils to be addressed. Activities aimed at improving literacy skills both in class and through small withdrawal groups are particularly effective.
15. Overall, there is no difference in the performance of pupils of ethnic minority background and those for whom English is an additional language when compared to other pupils in the school. There are some examples where such pupils do well. In history, they make good progress throughout the school and are often in the top sets. In French, many pupils for whom English is an additional language have well developed accents and do well with the speaking and listening aspects of the subject. The school has not systematically identified or developed strategies for those pupils who are gifted and talented. Although many do well in mathematics, science, history and geography, in other subjects such as English they are not challenged enough.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. One of the strengths of the school is the good positive attitude that pupils have towards the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Almost all the pupils talk positively about their lessons and many enjoy participating in the wide range of other activities available to them. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the sports, music and drama activities. Trampolining has become a favourite feature of life at St. Joseph's either in lessons or during lunchtime and after school. A group of girls from all year groups were totally involved and thoroughly enjoying choreographing their own piece at the after-school dance club. These pupils are very excited about their annual participation in the schools' dance festival, preparing a sequence to tunes from the musical *Grease*. Many pupils are still buzzing about their involvement in last summer's Millennium Celebration at Eton College Hall where they staged a musical event with 500 pupils from six other Catholic schools.

17. Their enthusiasm for school life extends to the classroom. Pupils talk with relish about the opportunities they get to use computers and the activities planned for them. This energy and excitement was evident in a Year 7 information and communication technology lesson where pupils rushed to begin their own work producing a folder about themselves. Almost all the pupils are genuinely interested in their learning and continue working diligently throughout their lessons. Year 10 English pupils reading a Thomas Hardy novel were engrossed in their work and were trying hard to understand the text. Pupils in a Year 7 science lesson were asking, and at times answering, their own questions about how to make a fair test of light shining through different materials. Parents value the positive attitudes that pupils have towards school and recognise how this contributes towards their progress.
18. Pupils who have special educational needs also enjoy school and have a positive approach to all their activities. They clearly value the help that they get from staff, appreciating the friendships and understanding the values the school is trying to promote.
19. The occasions when pupils' attitudes are less focused are rare. They are usually directly related to the teacher's skill both in motivating and stimulating the pupils and in clarifying expected behaviours.
20. Some parents expressed concern about the behaviour of pupils at the school. These concerns are mainly unjustified. Only a few pupils have difficulty obeying the school rules and conforming to the school's high expectations. The poor behaviour of these few very seldom prevents other pupils from concentrating and learning. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good; pupils are quiet, polite and obedient. Lessons are often characterised by calm, purposeful activity. When pupils are required to sit and work quietly they do so willingly and calmly. Pupils in a Year 9 geography lesson were well behaved as they got on with their business of drawing diagrams of earthquakes. When lessons demand more activity, however, pupils usually revel in exploring the situations suggested, without taking undue advantage of the freedom offered. Pupils in a Year 8 drama lesson were participating with relish in their improvisation of four different characters such as 'Punch'.
21. Pupils behave very well when they are in large formal situations such as assembly. Not a sound was heard as four Year 7 children carried candles to the corners of the hall during their weekly year group assembly. Most of the pupils are careful and considerate as they move around the school both indoors and outside. There are, however, a few pupils who do not respect the school's behaviour code, property or the rights of others to have a clean, litter-free environment. The behaviour of those pupils who are breaking the rules does not adversely affect the learning of the majority; nor does it upset the genuinely harmonious atmosphere of the school. No pupils were permanently excluded during last year and this is an improvement on previous years. The school has, however, been presented with a number of particularly challenging situations this year and has had no alternative but to make two permanent and 22 fixed-term exclusions. The school's response to the behaviour of this tiny minority is particularly caring and supportive. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that when it does occur it will be handled quickly, carefully and sensitively.
22. Genuine caring is a strong and significant feature of school life and one which is highly valued by parents. Relationships throughout the whole school community are good and pupils all assert that St Joseph's is a friendly community. Pupils enjoy learning together and sometimes choose to work together in lessons. When required to work in groups and pairs they do so willingly and eagerly. Sensible sharing of

ideas in groups helped Year 11 pupils make very good progress in their learning about the dangers of smoking. Pupils understand and respect the capabilities of others. Lots of patience and encouragement from the whole class helped Year 11 pupils overcome their apprehension and to master front drops on the trampoline.

23. The relationships between boys and girls, and between older and younger pupils, are relaxed. All age groups mix well in the various sports activities; younger girls were eagerly following the suggestions of older girls in the dance club. Year 7 pupils value the help and support which Year 11 prefects offer to tutor groups. Members of this community appreciate the needs, feelings and experiences of others. Year 8 pupils had organised a lunchtime party for a fellow pupil who is sad about leaving the school to go overseas. They show genuine interest in, and understanding of, other cultures, and respect and benefit from the diversity of experience of their fellow pupils.
24. Pupils form good relationships with adults. They quickly understand that each of them is cared for individually and this helps them feel secure in their relationships. Their confidence that the staff will make time for them enables them to balance friendship and respect. Very occasionally a few pupils are disrespectful, but this usually occurs only when pupils are insufficiently clear about exactly what is expected of them.
25. The school is successful in its aim to give the pupils confidence to deal with an unpredictable world. When the pupils begin their career at St Joseph's many lack confidence and are unsure of themselves. By the time the pupils leave the school they show levels of maturity and responsibility appropriate for their age. Many of the pupils are taking responsibility for their life in school. They manage their belongings and the daily routines without too much prompting from staff. They willingly perform tasks such as returning registers to the office, and a few volunteer to help with aspects of school life such as acting as librarians. Those pupils who are chosen from Years 10 and 11 to be prefects and monitors usually perform their duties sensibly and carefully. They provide valuable help to staff at break times as they check younger pupils' entering and leaving the playgrounds. There are a number of occasions in the classrooms when pupils show initiative. A group of Year 10 business students had worked well on their own ideas preparing a PowerPoint presentation on location of industries. Most pupils take a reasonable interest in the life and organisation of the school, but are not yet proactive in seeking ways to get more involved.
26. Attendance at the school is well below the average for pupils in secondary schools, and it is poor. The high level of absenteeism is due to authorised absence – the level of unauthorised absence is at the national average. Whilst most pupils attend regularly, and some exceptionally well, there are a few pupils who find regular attendance difficult. They are primarily in Year 11, but exist in all other year groups. Persistent absence by a tiny minority, and irregular absence by some, is having an adverse effect on standards. Despite considerable efforts by the school to encourage regular attendance, some parents and pupils are not yet fully committed. Rates are affected by a higher than average number of pupils being removed for holidays during term time. Attendance at the school has deteriorated since the previous inspection.
27. Most pupils arrive in school ready for registration at 8.45 a.m. Every day, however, there are a number of latecomers, some of whom have experienced difficulty with transport. Their late arrival disrupts some registrations and either interrupts assemblies or means they miss assembly altogether. Almost all the pupils arrive punctually for lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

28. There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and it is now a strength of the school. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of lessons, good or better in 60 per cent and very good or excellent in 25 per cent. At the time of the last inspection 88 per cent of teaching was satisfactory and 50 per cent was good. The quality of learning that such teaching promotes is good across both key stages. These findings confirm the views of parents.
29. The proportion of good and better teaching is slightly higher at Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 4, nearly 66 per cent of lessons observed were good or better. Across both key stages teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects and it is consistently good in geography, history, design and technology, art, business studies, and information and communication technology. In physical education it is very good. There were very few unsatisfactory lessons, which were mostly in English and science.
30. The strengths of teaching are the teachers' knowledge of their subjects, the effectiveness of their planning and the use of homework to extend learning. Whilst in most lessons seen the management of pupils was good, this was a common weakness in the lessons judged to be unsatisfactory. Other unsatisfactory features seen in such lessons were unsuitable teaching methods and a lack of activities that failed to engage, extend and challenge the pupils.
31. The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In all subjects the quality of learning matches the quality of teaching. Pupils made good progress in acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. In most lessons they worked at pace and showed interest and concentration. However, often learning was passive and pupils were given too few chances to develop as independent learners.
32. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. Good quality explanations and the use of skilful questioning enable pupils to make good progress with their learning. In a Year 8 geography lesson on tourism in Kenya, the lesson started briskly with questioning that engaged pupils in the subject matter. In another Year 8 lesson on poetry, questioning formed the basis for a good discussion. A mathematics lesson with Year 7 pupils on the subject of data handling demonstrated very good subject knowledge by the teacher and the use of effective questions to engage and challenge pupils. Another good example was seen in a Year 9 design and technology lesson in which the teacher used questioning skills effectively to reinforce pupils' knowledge of the properties of copper.
33. There were some good examples of the teaching of literacy skills across subjects. They are best developed in physical education and French. In a Year 9 physical education lesson, pupils read poems and then expressed their meaning through dance. This was a very good lesson in which pupils' reading and understanding of the poem was clearly enhanced. In a Year 10 geography lesson on tourism in Spain, pupils' note-making skills showed they had been well supported by the teacher. They were accurate and demonstrated the pupils' ability to research information and record in the appropriate level of detail. However, some weaknesses in literacy were also observed. For example, the writing skills required for an extended coursework task for GCSE mathematics examinations are underdeveloped and pupils work their solutions with no fluent explanation of the method or technique used. Similar weaknesses were seen in geography. Overall, the teaching of numeracy skills across subjects is satisfactory. Some good examples were seen in science and design and technology. In geography, although pupils were able to handle data in lessons, this was less secure under examination conditions. In art, activities involving numeracy were not developed.

34. Teachers' planning is a strength across the school. Planning is based upon the departmental schemes of work. Good use is made of individual education plans in preparing the work for those pupils with special educational needs. On a few occasions, planning did not take sufficient account of the different needs of learners within the group. In such cases, it was often the more-able pupils who were not sufficiently recognised. This was the case in many English lessons where the planning failed to identify approaches to challenge the higher and lower attaining pupils. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson on fractions, planning was clearly effective and the aims of the lesson were made explicit to the pupils. The quality of the explanations and worked examples then enabled pupils to progress with their learning. Similarly in a Year 8 science lesson on microbes, the teacher had planned a good range of activities, including those for pupils with special educational needs.
35. An area of teaching that is not fully developed is the establishment of higher expectations and greater challenge. In the very best lessons, the establishment of high expectations and challenge promoted good learning. Such examples were seen in French, physical education and business studies lessons. In a bottom set Year 8 French lesson, the teacher set high expectations for behaviour and work. The lesson was delivered at pace and pupils made very good progress with their learning. In a Year 10 business studies lesson on the location of industry, the pupils were set interesting and thought-provoking tasks using PowerPoint to develop a presentation. However, in some lessons observed, lack of challenge was a feature of the lesson, which meant that pupils made poor progress. This was the case in some lessons in English and science.
36. Inspection findings show that, overall, teachers are using a good range of methods that effectively promote good learning. Strengths were seen in French, history, physical education and art. In a Year 10 art lesson, good planning established a clear set of aims and activities. Pupils were well supported in their task of observational drawing; this included the use of teacher demonstration using a computer. In French, many lessons were characterised by the effective use of paired work and group work. Teachers used imaginative approaches to reinforce vocabulary and phrases. In a Year 10 lesson, an amusing song was used which provided continuing stimulation for the pupils. In a Year 11 geography lesson, good use was made of video material on a recent earthquake to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding of terminology. Often, however, the approaches used were too narrow and there was an over reliance on teacher-led discussions. Effective practice was seen in a Year 8 history lesson on the English Civil War. Pupils were organised into groups and set the challenging task of analysing and categorising evidence to interpret a question on the divine right of kings. Whilst such examples were seen across most subject areas, in mathematics there tended to be too much reliance on discussion and board work and in English some lessons were uninspiring and limited.
37. The management of pupils is good and is a strength of most teachers. Good planning and organisation, high expectations, effective behaviour management strategies and sensitive and skilful teaching ensure a suitable atmosphere for learning. Standards of behaviour in most lessons are good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are good. Very good management of pupils was seen in geography, information and communication technology and physical education. In a few lessons across both key stages, some pupils did not behave well. In such lessons, teachers either failed to control the pupils, did not deal with off-task or poor behaviour, or did not select suitable teaching methods or materials to engage the pupils in their learning.

38. Inspection findings show that most subject teachers make good use of time, support staff and resources. Good lesson planning promotes the effective use of time. Most pupils arrive to lessons on time, registers are taken and late arrivals are reprimanded. This was a consistent strength in science, but in some English lessons, especially at Key Stage 4, late arrivals were not challenged and use of time was less effective. In many French, geography and history lessons teachers ensured a brisk start to the lesson by the use of questioning. Pace of learning was generally good and in many lessons activities were set which pupils had to complete in a given amount of time. The management of time was very effective in a Year 9 food technology lesson, in a Year 8 textiles lesson, in a Year 10 French lesson and in a Year 8 French lesson. Learning support assistants are used very effectively both within the special educational needs department and across some subject areas. For example, effective work by learning assistants were seen in a bottom set Year 10 mathematics lesson and in a bottom set Year 8 science lesson. The use of resources is satisfactory, but examples of their good use were seen in many lessons in design and technology, geography and history. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson on the causes of the First World War, textbooks were supplemented by the use of the overhead projector and photographs to provide a wider range of sources. Availability and access to information and communication technology has recently improved and is now being used well in some subject areas. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson computers were used to help pupils with writing a short comprehension task.
39. The use of assessment is satisfactory. In science, there has been good progress in improving the assessment of pupils' work. Such work is now consistently marked and guidance is given on strengths and weaknesses. In mathematics, staff absence and the failure to recruit a permanent member of the department have resulted in some unsatisfactory marking of pupils' work. In history, at Key Stage 4, pupils are encouraged to assess their own work. On-going assessment is effective in music. In a Year 7 music lesson, such assessment was used effectively to help pupils with developing their knowledge and skills of composing and playing. Overall, the use of assessment to inform lesson planning needs to be improved, as does the consistency of marking and its purpose in identifying future targets for pupils.
40. Although a number of parents raised concerns about homework, inspection findings show that it is used effectively to reinforce and extend what is learnt in school. In a Year 9 music lesson, homework was set for pupils to produce a self-evaluation of what they had learnt in the lesson when comparing their own work against that of a professional musician. There are good examples of relevant homework in science. In a Year 8 lesson on microbes, homework was set to reinforce the learning from the current lesson and to build a bridge for the next lesson. A review of the previous homework was effectively used in a Year 10 geography lesson to provide clear guidance as to what the pupils were to learn. In mathematics it is unsatisfactory. The absence of permanent members of staff has resulted in inconsistencies with the setting of suitable homework.
41. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make progress with their learning. Teachers have a good knowledge of the pupils. Good use is made of individual education plans and most subject teachers provide work to meet the needs of the pupils. In science and French, teachers add their own subject specific targets. Teaching is good for those pupils withdrawn for additional support. The use of learning assistants is well planned, targeted and effective.
42. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported by their teachers and they make good progress with their learning. When additional teaching is required this too is of good quality. For example, in a Year 7 food technology

lesson two pupils for whom English is an additional language were well supported with their reading and speaking by an extra member of staff.

43. The improvement of teaching is a priority in the school improvement plan. Some areas require further improvement. There is a need to ensure that all teachers establish high expectations for behaviour and work; in some lessons, there was insufficient challenge for pupils, especially the more able. Assessment procedures are not applied consistently.

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

44. The curriculum at both key stages is generally satisfactory, but the needs of some pupils at Key Stage 4 are not adequately met. The provision of information and communication technology does not meet legal requirements and there are no vocational courses. Therefore, as it was at the previous inspection, the curriculum is not satisfactory overall.
45. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. Pupils follow courses in all National Curriculum subjects and in addition pupils can study drama. At Key Stage 4, statutory requirements are not met as not all pupils have the chance to study information and communication technology. The curriculum is enhanced by the addition of expressive arts and business studies. Although music is offered, this is outside the normal teaching day. Pupils whose home language is not English can sit a GCSE in their first language. Across both key stages there is effective provision for personal and social education. This is offered as a GCSE course at Key Stage 4 in the school.
46. At Key Stage 3, the school place pupils into sets. This commences with English and mathematics in Year 7 and extends through the other subjects across the key stage. Parents appreciate this organisation and feel that it is supportive of pupils of all abilities. The system also helps teachers to adapt the subjects more easily to meet the needs of most pupils. Teaching groups are reviewed each half term and pupils are moved if necessary. However, the school does not yet identify gifted and talented pupils or support their needs. The system of setting does not fully meet what is required for the most able. Some extension work was seen, but this is an area in which the school has not developed its provision. The work that the school is doing in conjunction with other schools through the Education Action Zone provides the more able with better opportunities to extend and develop their abilities. There is some good work in science and there are plans to aid gifted musicians in the near future.
47. The school has a literacy strategy for teaching pupils the skills of reading and writing and this is satisfactory. However, not all departments implement the development of these skills to the extent that is necessary and co-ordination and monitoring is unsatisfactory. Good work was seen in French where pupils were required to consider grammatical structures. In most departments, for example science and music, key words are displayed on walls and in pupils' exercise books that help them with spelling and comprehension. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. However, its co-ordination is unsatisfactory and staff do not have written guidance.
48. The personal and social education programme is of good quality. It includes careers education, sex education and health education, including drugs awareness. The personal and social education programme is taught across the whole school at the same time. This allows flexibility for visiting speakers to address different groups of

pupils. Year 10 pupils undertake a week of work experience in May and the school works closely with a regional group that helps to find work placements. The work experience programme is of good quality and helps pupils develop an understanding of the work place.

49. There is equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils, but some pupils in Years 10 and 11 would benefit from a more relevant curriculum matched to their needs. The school is considering the implementation of vocational course to address this problem. The opportunities for pupils with special educational needs are good and they are well supported throughout the school. When pupils who have reading difficulties enter the school at 11, they are placed on a reading programme. This has proved to be very successful. Of the 35 pupils who started on that programme in September 1999, only six still required help in September 2000. At Key Stage 4, the pupils who have statements of special educational need study one GCSE subject fewer than their classmates. They spend the time this creates in a group where they are helped to improve their reading and writing and also to complete the coursework for the subjects they are studying. This is a successful strategy as in recent years all pupils have gained at least one GCSE at the end of Year 11. Some pupils for whom English is an additional language are given help by teaching that is funded by the Ethnic Minority and Travellers' Achievement Grant. However, such provision is limited because of available funding.
50. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. For example, the library is open before school each morning and at lunchtimes to allow private study. Enhancement lessons in French and history are also available before school. At lunchtime and after school there is a good range of musical and sporting activities. Some departments such as history and special educational needs make study facilities available to pupils. After school there is a study hour in the library, revision clubs and various sporting activities, including girls' football. There are also opportunities such as extra-mural arts, cultural days, trips and visits and the presence in school of a Theatre in Education group. However, the school does not monitor the effectiveness of these activities or which pupils take them up.
51. There are good links with the community, which further enhance the curriculum. The school is part of an Education Action Zone and is working with other schools in Slough to improve the educational experiences of pupils. There are good links with the parish and the school provides weekly parenting classes for members of the local community. The links with the Education Business Partnership are good and improving. A number of local employers come into the school to talk about careers. However, the community makes limited use of the school and the taught curriculum makes little use of what community members may have to offer. The school has a very good link with a local special school. Pupils from that school come and take part in a variety of lessons, particularly in design and technology. The two schools have worked together on a one-world festival and have been involved in a video conference with a school in the south of France.
52. The school has satisfactory links with feeder primary schools. The headteacher visits local Catholic primary schools and talks to parents and pupils about transfer arrangements. In July, pupils who are about to come to St Joseph's visit the school for a programme of familiarisation and induction. There are some curriculum links with primary schools, such as the summer school held for pupils who need to improve their reading skills, but the area of curriculum links generally remains underdeveloped.
53. Overall, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is well provided through assemblies and through some very

good class worship. In French classes the pupils say a prayer, in French, at the start of lessons. In science lessons, work was seen on the evolution of human beings and the formation of the universe with God placed firmly at the centre of this as the creator of energy.

54. Moral development is good and the school raises money for charities. In science, a lesson was seen where pupils were involved in talking about genetics and 'designer babies'. There was also another discussion on the use of nuclear energy. Pupils in a French class discussed the likely outcomes of a lifestyle that included truancy, stealing, drug taking and smoking. In a Year 8 dance lesson, girls used the inspiration of a Wilfred Owen poem to interpret a response to the morality of war.
55. Social education is satisfactory with some good aspects and some that are less well developed. Residential visits improve personal development and in physical education, music and French there are good examples of pupils sharing and taking turns. Pupils are taught to listen to each other's point of view and to treat each other and the teacher with courtesy and respect. All members of staff in the school are considerate and caring, treating pupils well. As such they are excellent role models for developing young people. However, some areas of the school do not promote social development, as they are not pleasant environments. For example, toilets are locked except at breaks. The role of the monitors and prefects is underdeveloped and there is no involvement of pupils in the running of the school through a school council or similar organisation.
56. Cultural development is good, as there is a good number of extra-curricular activities. Trips to the theatre, to concerts and to sporting events provide pupils with a good perspective on wider events. There are opportunities too, for all pupils to experience the wide range of cultures present in the school, when talent shows present song and dance from a number of continents. In science, pupils were seen to study healthy diets from a number of cultures. A netball team went on tour to Barcelona while water sports trips have gone to the south of France. In design and technology, multi-cultural elements are present in both food technology and in textiles.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. The school rightly claims that each pupil is welcomed as a unique individual, whose talents, gifts, skills and abilities are valued and developed. This happens because all staff know their pupils very well. Significant time and energy are spent identifying and meeting the needs of each individual pupil, ensuring the high level of pastoral support that parents appreciate and value. However, the arrangements for pupils' care are unsatisfactory because of a number of issues, resulting primarily from the unsatisfactory condition of the grounds and part of the building. The school already has plans to address the unacceptably high amount of mud around the site and to improve aspects of the building, such as the lavatories and the showers. During the inspection the school was alerted to the situations and activities that need addressing. Recent revision of arrangements for the management of health and safety are already securing improvement in the promotion and monitoring of all procedures.
58. The very genuine and consistently caring attitude of the staff is of particular benefit to the welfare of the pupils. Very good transfer and induction arrangements ensure that pupils' needs are identified and supported by careful allocation to tutor groups. Year heads provide good help to their tutor teams, giving sensitive guidance for the handling of difficult situations. The positive rapport between tutors and pupils encourages pupils to be confident that help is always available. Pupils' concerns are heard sympathetically and always followed up with sensitivity and care.

59. Registrations are usually used effectively to guide pupils, although there is a significant variation in quality. In the best practice, pupils are helped to prepare themselves for the morning and afternoon sessions, to consider their own responsibilities and to reflect on the situations of others. The pupils themselves offered prayers for the recent Indian earthquake victims and their families during one exceptionally good Year 7 registration. Sometimes, however, when practices are unsatisfactory pupils are neither settled calmly nor provided with sufficient, purposeful activities to compose themselves for their lessons.
60. The contribution which all support staff make to ensure pupils' welfare is very good. The general office runs very smoothly and this efficient administration ensures that information about pupils passes quickly and effectively. Those who are sick or injured are looked after carefully. The school has worked hard to improve all its arrangements for first-aid, which are now very good, an improvement since the previous inspection. Child protection arrangements are good. The school works very effectively with other agencies. The education welfare officer talks with tutor groups about the importance of regular attendance; the local behaviour support team provides specialist help and advice to school staff, running anger-management and self-esteem classes. The school counsellor is also involved in these activities and gives very good support. These links benefit the overall welfare of the pupils experiencing difficulty as they progress through the school.
61. The school takes very good care of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Tutors involve them with setting and meeting targets, raising their self-esteem, and by providing skilled teaching and well-planned work. Individual education plans are of good quality, providing teachers and learning assistants with details of how pupils can be helped. There is a section on each plan that suggests how parents and carers can help and a section on what the pupil needs to do. These plans are reviewed each term and careful consideration is given to how the pupil can best be helped in the light of what they have achieved to date.
62. The school has good arrangements for promoting acceptable behaviour, which ensure the civilised atmosphere that exists. The code of conduct is usually consistently applied and clearly understood by the whole community. Almost all the pupils are committed to the school rules and sanctions, including exclusions. Some pupils have individual education plans for behaviour; these are regularly reviewed and all staff have access to them. There are regular pastoral plan meetings involving the Behaviour Support Service and a range of strategies are in place. These include the provision for pupils to go to the special needs room if they feel they are beginning to lose their temper. The school has developed a good range of rewards and sanctions that it monitors effectively. The use of coloured slips as warnings and detentions is carefully recorded and analysed. A pastoral support plan is prepared and action taken when necessary. Rewards are generally used well to motivate the pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils respond very positively to the recognition they are given. A group of Year 11 girls all chose to be awarded their gymnastic certificates at assembly rather than simply in their tutor period. Although information computer technology is used to record and analyse the data on sanctions it is not yet used to support the use of rewards.
63. Arrangements to promote regular attendance are good, but their impact on improving standards is less marked. Whilst many staff are working very hard to encourage all pupils to attend regularly, not all staff apply the same rigour and consistency to ensuring that pupils adopt a positive attitude to attendance. The school is not yet

using a computerised system for registration. An attendance clerk is employed and this is having a positive impact on both pupils and parents. There is an increasing awareness that absence will be followed up immediately and that full explanations will be required. Attendance is monitored on a weekly basis and very good use is made of the education welfare officer to follow up regular absenteeism. The school makes some good use of competitions and rewards to motivate students. During an assembly many Year 7 pupils displayed pride as they received certificates for 100 per cent attendance last term. The school does not yet analyse attendance figures for boys and girls and different ethnic groups.

64. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and academic progress. Good progress has been made in science and mathematics with developing systems of assessment. However, practice across departments is variable. Teachers make clear to pupils what is being assessed and provide effective oral and written feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. Not all departments follow the school's policy for marking pupils' work using grades A to E for achievement, which confuses both pupils and parents. Subject targets are not regularly set and monitored in all departments. There is no whole-school approach to the setting and monitoring of pupils' individual targets within subject areas. In science, there are good arrangements for tracking pupils' progress each half term and pupils are given a progress mark. In history, teachers interview pupils to discuss their progress. All Year 11 pupils are supported effectively by teachers who monitor their achievements through the mentoring system.
65. Teachers' use of assessment information to modify and improve their long and short term curriculum planning is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. The school collects a great deal of assessment information on pupils, which is distributed to teachers, but departments do not yet have access to this information electronically. The data has been used to help place pupils in upper and lower bands. There is no system to collate assessment results for information and communication technology across the curriculum. Assessment information is used particularly effectively in history to help place pupils into sets and to identify pupils in Key Stage 4 who will sit the Certificate of Achievement examination. In music, teachers use assessments very well to review modules of work.
66. Good arrangements are in place for guiding pupils' personal development. Tutors know their pupils very well and information about pupils' attitudes and effort passes formally and informally between the staff. Pastoral meetings are used effectively to share information and the cohesion of the whole staff team ensures regular communication about an individual pupil's personal needs. The recently introduced pupil progress cards are helping to support personal development in particular. They are given out in the two terms when there is not a full annual report and contain useful grades about effort, attendance, homework, behaviour and organisation in addition to grades for achievement. Any change in aspects of a pupil's approach to school is identified and suitable action taken. Annual reports contain useful targets for personal development and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for these. The school has just instigated a programme of individual tutor review sessions beginning with Year 8. These timetabled interviews are providing good opportunities for detailed discussion of individual progress and experiences. These sessions are also useful for refining the multiple targets which pupils have been given, several for each subject, into the few specific targets that will be most effective in securing improvement in attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. The majority of parents are supportive of the school and the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents recognise and applaud the school's strengths, particularly the way it is led and managed and the high expectations that it has for the pupils. A number expressed concern about the use of homework and the manner in which the school works with parents. These worries are unjustified. The disquiet expressed by a minority of parents about conduct reflects the unsatisfactory behaviour of a very few pupils. The school almost always ensures that this behaviour does not affect the overall progress that pupils make in the school.
68. The school is genuine in the welcome that it extends and all staff are open in their approach to parents. They commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents. They listen carefully to their queries and are diligent in following up concerns. The welcome extended by office staff is friendly and efficient. This initial welcome is further enhanced by the attractive and interesting displays in the entrance hall.
69. Some of the general information that the school provides is good. The newsletters are interesting and informative and both the information booklets about the key stages give parents a clear picture of the content and organisation of their child's life at the school. These booklets also contain good information about the arrangements for homework. The prospectus and the annual governors' report fulfil legal requirements but are not, however, written in a style that most parents find easy and enjoyable to read. There was little involvement of parents in the drafting of the home-school agreement; the school is now considering how it will involve parents more with its revision.
70. Arrangements for reporting to parents have improved considerably recently. The ways that parents can learn about their children's progress have improved and are now good. Parental anxieties regarding the quality of information provided about progress are in the main unjustified; some parents may not yet fully appreciate the recent changes. The school has improved its arrangements for parent teacher consultation evenings since the previous inspection, taking parental concerns about timing into account. A report is provided termly for parents; the full annual report is provided in one term and pupil progress review cards in the other two. These cards are a useful addition to the reporting systems, but are confusing for parents and pupils. Furthermore, parents and some staff are uncertain whether grades reflect achievement in the particular group the child is in or across the whole year group.
71. The school is continually reviewing its arrangements for providing annual reports. The current format provides a significant description of subject-specific detail and the quality of the comments is generally good. Targets for improvement are included in each subject report, but these are often rather general and focused on effort and attitude. The school is currently rationalising its approach to the use of target setting to help pupils and their parents take a more pro-active part in managing their own learning. The school still does not report information and communication technology as a separate subject.
72. Parents of pupils with special educational needs value the way in which the department informs them and works with them in support of their children. Statement review meetings are carried out regularly with parents and the discussion is one between equal partners - parent, educational psychologist, special educational needs co-ordinator and pupil. Parents are also suitably involved in the review of pastoral support plans.

73. Whilst many parents are supportive of the school from afar, only a few are actively involved in the school. The help provided by the Friends Association with raising funds for the school is valued and valuable. The help of parents who transport children to various events and competitions is much appreciated by the school. Many parents attend school productions, such as the recent performance of *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. The school is hopeful that the improvements it has made in promoting the value of parental involvement will lead more parents to become involved with the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The headteacher provides sound leadership to the staff and pupils of the school. He leads by example, knows the pupils well and does much to promote a calm and caring atmosphere. He is well supported by two deputy headteachers. The previously identified vacancies for heads of department have now been filled and the quality of middle management is good. There is a shared commitment by the governing body and staff to improvement and the school has the capacity to succeed.
75. The school has a set of aims and values that focus on learning, personal development, community and worship. Although they provide the broad basis for the work of the school these should be reviewed. There is a need for a greater emphasis to be placed on learning and raising pupils' attainment. The gifted and talented pupils need to be identified and supported to ensure they reach their potential.
76. Recently the school received external advice on developing its management structures and has begun to implement the recommendations. There is now greater delegation of responsibilities. The deputy headteachers have assumed line management responsibilities for the subject areas and key stages, and this is leading to greater accountability. However, some aspects of the school's work remain unsatisfactory and there is a need for more effective management and co-ordination to ensure that policies are consistently implemented and that good practice is identified and shared.
77. Overall, the work of the governing body is satisfactory. Members of the governing body are committed and work hard to support the school. The governors are effective in discharging their responsibilities as critical friends and are developing an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body has some involvement with planning and formulating a strategic view for the school, but it needs to be more proactive. Although currently there is a failure to meet statutory requirements for the provision and reporting of information and communication technology, there are development plans to show that this is being addressed. In all other respects the governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They have agreed a policy for performance management and the process of agreeing targets for the headteacher and staff has commenced. Good progress has been made with the key issue raised in the previous inspection report to keep the work of subject departments under review and with the appointment of the heads of art, mathematics and science.
78. The special educational needs team is well led by a co-ordinator who sets clear aims and, with meticulous administration, enables the team to achieve them. The links with other subject departments are good and the support staff are well trained. The need to improve the quality of targets in the individual education plans as identified in the previous inspection has been addressed. The annual review process for pupils with statements of educational need and other statutory requirements are met.

79. There has been very good progress with developing approaches to monitoring and evaluation of subject departments. There is an established process of analysing subject performance and target setting. All heads of department now observe subject staff against an agreed observation schedule. A further level of monitoring and evaluation of teaching is conducted by members of the senior management team. This is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching by identifying strengths and weaknesses.
80. Monitoring and evaluation of other areas of the school are less well developed. For example, formal processes to monitor the effectiveness of key developments such as assessment, literacy and numeracy are not yet implemented.
81. Most of the weaknesses in the school improvement plan that were identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed. It now has a good format and contains a set of relevant priorities. However, a continuing weakness is the failure to identify the financial resources and staff development training needed to implement the actions. Departments are now using development plans, but their quality is variable and again they fail to accurately identify costs and staff training needs. To ensure that the school continues to meet its targets, planning at whole-school and departmental level should include explicit priorities for raising pupils' attainment.
82. The school has good systems of financial planning and control. The school bursar and governing body finance committee work together closely to ensure that resources are deployed effectively. The recommendations of the last audit commission have been implemented. The school uses information technology well to support financial and administrative systems. There is good use made of specific grants, such as those to support pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Such grants are specifically targeted, regulated and evaluated. There is a growing understanding of the principles of best value. Although good use is made of comparative data on pupils' performance, as yet no use is made of comparisons of the school's spending with those of other similar schools.
83. In mathematics, there is a shortage of specialist staff and this is having an adverse effect upon pupils' progress. The headteacher and governing body have worked energetically and imaginatively to attempt to resolve this situation. The head of department has provided good support to the succession of temporary teachers and has provided additional lessons outside the timetable to help Year 11 pupils in their GCSE year. There remains a vacancy for a subject leader in information and communication technology. Under an interim arrangement one of the deputy headteachers is providing good leadership in this area. In other areas of the curriculum, there is a good match between the teachers' expertise and subject needs even in the small number of cases where there is some non-specialist teaching. There is a good programme of staff development including induction programmes for newly qualified staff and other new teachers. Such programmes have contributed significantly to improvements in teaching.
84. The teachers are well supported by administrative and other staff. There is now a specialist technician for science and technology and recently a network manager has been appointed. There is no foreign language assistant to help the French department.
85. The school has adequate accommodation, including its own playing fields and outdoor areas, to allow the curriculum to be taught. There have been considerable improvements to accommodation since the previous inspection. A new teaching

block has been built for music and drama. These rooms provide a good base for music and a satisfactory room for drama, although acoustics in the latter are poor. Accommodation for science is now good, an improvement since the previous inspection. The refurbished resistant materials area in design and technology presents a good teaching environment, but some of the machinery installed lacks the necessary safety switches and safe working areas around machines are not delineated. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is good and has a positive impact on learning.

86. The buildings are free of graffiti. There are some attractive wall displays; for example they are very good in the rooms used for French. There are informative and celebratory displays for physical education. Such displays not only celebrate pupils' achievements, but are also an effective resource to aid learning.
87. Changing facilities are very cramped when large groups are timetabled for physical education. Some parts of the building are not well cleaned. Poor external drainage leads to very waterlogged areas after rain and mud is inevitably brought into most parts of the buildings. Although unsightly, it is not a health and safety hazard. This issue was raised in the previous inspection report.
88. There are satisfactory resources to help teaching in most subjects. There has been considerable expenditure on information and communication technology recently, which has increased provision and enabled simplification of access to computers through networking in the school. However, the computer to pupil ratio is still well below the national average. The facilities in the two main computer rooms, which include Internet access, are being used increasingly well. There is also Internet access in science, design and technology and special educational needs. In science, there is information and communication technology equipment for sensing and collecting data. This equipment is used well, for example, when checking and recording how much light passes through different fabrics during an investigation carried out by a Year 7 class. There are very good and well-used facilities for computer design and graphics based in the design and technology department. However, in this department there is limited equipment for the teaching of other graphic techniques. Appropriate information communication technology resources are available to aid the teaching of music. In design and technology, there are now facilities for pupils to carry out on-screen control on computers, but not for computer-controlled machinery. More equipment is needed to deliver the use of pneumatics.
89. There are now sufficient textbooks for the examination course in physical education, an improvement since the last inspection. However, some pupils have to buy their own texts for English and there continue to be insufficient textbooks for science. There are insufficient textbooks for some French classes, although this situation is improving. The lack of textbooks restricts the range of homework.
90. The library is an attractive room. The book stock has improved since the previous inspection and pupils have access to two computer workstations and the Internet as a research tool. A further improvement is that the library is now available for pupils on a regular basis, including before and after school sessions. Observations made during the inspection showed that at such times the library was well used.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve the standards reached by pupils and the quality of education that the school provides, the school should:

- (1) Improve levels of attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
- arresting the decline in the standards in English;
 - reviewing the school aims and providing a greater emphasis on improving attainment;
 - ensuring that whole-school and departmental plans have a specific focus on raising attainment;
 - further developing teaching to ensure higher expectations of pupils' work, especially in English;
 - improving challenge so that all pupils, including the more able are appropriately stretched, especially in English;
 - putting into place systems to identify, monitor and support gifted and talented pupils;
 - reviewing learning styles to promote more independent learning for pupils.
- (Paragraphs - 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 16, 26, 36, 44, 76, 82, 96, 97, 98, 114, 131 and 142)*
- (2) Continue with the drive to improve attendance by:
- implementing consistently existing strategies;
 - ensuring that all departments have in place strategies for supporting pupils who return from absence.
- (Paragraphs - 7, 27, 96 and 120)*
- (3) Develop more rigour and greater consistency with the co-ordination and evaluation of the policies and practice for literacy, numeracy, assessment and extra-curricular activities.
- (Paragraphs - 9, 48, 51, 77, 81 and 158)*
- (4) Ensure that financial resources are more clearly identified in both whole-school and department plans.
- (Paragraphs - 81, 106, 128 and 149)*
- (5) Further develop the use of assessment to establish a process of individual target setting for pupils so that they have clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- (Paragraphs – 40, 65, 72, 117 and 171)*
- (6) Improve the quality of provision and standards in information communication technology by:
- ensuring that the statutory requirements for the curriculum are met at Key Stage 4;
 - putting into place reporting requirements for the end of Key Stage 4.
- (Paragraphs – 12,45,46,72,78,89,154 and 158)*

Other matters requiring attention:

- (7) The appointment of specialist teachers of mathematics.

- (8) Further developing the use and application of the principles of best value, especially in relation to financial benchmarking.
- (9) Improve the quality of the morning and afternoon registrations to ensure that pupils have an appropriate start to their lessons.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

142

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

50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	23	35	36.0	4.	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	Sixth form
	Number of pupils on the school's roll	591
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	81	N/a

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	100	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	124

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	10.4
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	71	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	22	26	15
	Girls	53	43	31
	Total	75	69	46
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	63 (72)	58 (52)	38 (24)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	11 (37)	19 (12)	6 (1)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	27	26	21
	Girls	58	48	45
	Total	85	74	66
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	71 (78)	63 (54)	56 (45)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	23 (37)	22 (17)	17 (5)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	48	97

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A* - G	1 or more grades A* - G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	12	45	49
	Girls	12	43	48
	Total	24	88	97
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	25 (21)	92 (95)	100 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	31 (31)
	National	38.4 (38.1)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	19
Black – African heritage	12
Black – other	5
Indian	30
Pakistani	30
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	468
Any other minority ethnic group	27

Ethnic min – 123 but EAL box gives 124 – presume one must be white category

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	2	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	23	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	37.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	259

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.1%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23.64
Key Stage 4	21.41

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,647,016
Total expenditure	1,594,156
Expenditure per pupil	2787
Balance brought forward from previous year	-48,895
Balance carried forward to next year	3,965

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	591
Number of questionnaires returned	161

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	43	8	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	54	10	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	46	16	7	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	47	22	6	2
The teaching is good.	28	58	7	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	44	17	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	4	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	42	4	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	54	16	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	43	45	3	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	52	10	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	50	11	2	7

Other issues raised by parents

A number of parents raised concerns about teaching vacancies in the mathematics department. They were anxious about the lack of continuity in teaching, marking and homework.

A few parents expressed the view that some pupils were not being stretched.

Several parents spoke positively about the work of the school in supporting pupils with special educational needs.

French was singled out for special praise.

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

ENGLISH

92. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, 63 per cent of pupils gained Level 5 and above. This was in line with those attained in all schools. However, only 11 per cent gained passes at the higher levels of 6 and above and this was well below the national average. Standards overall have been fairly consistent over the three-year period between 1996 and 1999, although they fell in 2000. They are generally in line with the school's targets. The attainment of both boys and girls is broadly in line with the respective national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress as a result of the good provision made for them. Standards in speaking and listening have improved since the last inspection as a result of greater attention to this aspect of pupils' work in lessons. Pupils make good progress with reading and writing and standards are broadly in line with national age-related expectations. Provision for drama is good at Key Stage 3, and there are many talented pupils in the school as instanced by the many successful dramatic and musical productions.
93. Standards attained by pupils aged 16 are well below the national averages for all schools. They are also well below the averages for modern schools. In the 2000 GCSE English language examination, the national average for grades A*-C in modern schools was 44 per cent, while the school's result was 24 per cent. It has fallen from the 36 per cent achieved in 1998. Standards are much better in English literature, where there are fewer entrants. In the GCSE English literature examination, the national average for grades A*-C in modern schools was 50 per cent, while the school's result was a commendable 64 per cent. This was a significant improvement on the 1999 results. English literature also compares favourably with other subjects in the school. In both examinations, boys performed better than boys in similar schools. Girls performed worse than girls in similar schools. Contrary to the national trend, boys do relatively better than girls, reflecting their greater interest and commitment to the subject. In the 2000 English language and literature examinations, most pupils who entered the examinations attained grades A*-G. However, very few pupils ever achieve the higher A* or A grade, or even the B grade, in either examination, even having performed well at Key Stage 3. Many pupils who achieve a C grade in the English literature examination fail to do so in English language, often achieving D or even E grades. The school does not provide literacy examinations for lower-attaining pupils as an alternative or a supplement to the GCSE.
94. At Key Stage 3, inspection findings showed that lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 are able to select verbs from a text. They understand the importance of short sentences as when writing a storybook suitable for younger children. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 8 are able to analyse two poems, making comparisons in terms of style, tone and viewpoint. They understand how to use imagery when writing their own poems. Lower-attaining pupils work well when working collaboratively to write a poem in a 'winter shape' of a snowman. In drama, pupils improvise well, responding to tasks imaginatively and creatively, as when creating characterisations. Similarly, pupils in Year 9 create a witch character from *Macbeth* using voice and movement, and are particularly adept at evaluating their own work, and the work of others. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 9 respond to well-selected materials by demonstrating their interest in *Macbeth*, as when examining his speech before the murder of Duncan. They understand the basic plot, appreciating the role of Banquo. Higher-attaining pupils are able to extract meaning from beyond the literal, as when studying Langston Hughes' *Thank you, m'am*.

95. At Key Stage 4, standards in English literature are good. Some pupils in Year 10 understand the themes of superstition and witchcraft when they study Thomas Hardy's *The Withered Arm*. Some higher-attaining pupils write secure character profiles. Lower-attaining pupils understand how newspapers may indulge in exaggeration and influence our behaviour. Some are able to analyse articles, for example, on the theme of 'violence', appreciating how meanings are changed when texts are adapted to different audiences. In Year 11, pupils analyse post Twentieth Century dramatic writing such as J. B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*, and some can draw out the meaning accurately. Higher-attaining pupils annotate texts, displaying good listening skills, with some making effective contributions to debate and discussion about the story. However, standards in English language are affected adversely by the way in which a minority of the pupils, especially the older girls, responds to some teaching which is uninteresting and not matched well to individual needs. Commitment to English does not improve as pupils progress through the school. Poor attendance and punctuality to lessons also affect the progress made by some pupils. The standard of work seen with the more-able pupils was not as high as it should be. Standards at Key Stage 4 remain as they were reported at the time of the last inspection, that is below those in other modern schools.
96. There is evidence of sound literacy skills improving pupils' performance across most subjects. There is satisfactory progress with literacy skills as pupils move through the school. Pupils are given a satisfactory range of activities to develop these skills in lessons and through extra-curricular activities such as drama productions. In many subjects, for example science, history and geography, careful attention is paid to the use of technical language and pupils' learning is well supported by 'word walls' displaying key terms. Pupils reading skills are sound, improving over time. Pupils with special educational needs are given additional support and they make good progress in reading. Standards of writing are satisfactory throughout the school and are average for pupils of all attainments. However, in geography and history pupils do not always explain things clearly and they lack fluency with their written work. Overall, teachers' expectations of presentation are sound.
97. Overall, teaching in English is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, but it is not as good as it was reported at the last inspection. No very good teaching was observed. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in both key stages. Some teaching failed to address the ability levels of the different classes and the teachers misjudged what the pupils were able to understand. Other weaknesses are the inability of some teachers to secure and maintain good control of the class, and a failure to make the subject interesting so that pupils, of all levels of attainment, enjoy their lessons.
98. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding in the way they develop basic skills are satisfactory. Lesson planning is sound, with pupils usually being aware of the particular focus of every piece of work. Most lessons routinely cover all the different aspects of the subject, that is, speaking and listening, reading and writing. However, many lessons do not always challenge the higher-attaining pupils, while they also do not stretch the lower-attaining pupils. Teachers usually enjoy good relationships with pupils and when they engage the pupils in purposeful, clear and imaginative tasks, pupils invariably respond well. Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology. For example, pupils are given tasks to draft and present work using word-processing skill, as in their imaginative story writing. Assessment, including for those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Marking is regular, but is not consistent. Teachers respect pupils' efforts, especially the higher-attaining pupils, but marking does not always inform pupils clearly about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Homework is valued and is contributing to the

development of pupils' skills. Displays of pupils' work are satisfactory, with some good examples to celebrate pupils' achievements and to act as a resource for learning. Only three lessons in drama were seen. At Key Stage 3, drama teaching is good. Pupils are able to understand the text and demonstrate creativity and imagination using voice and movement.

99. Pupils of all attainments respond well to the subject and make good progress in their lessons. Their behaviour is usually satisfactory in English. Their attitudes are also usually satisfactory and many are confident to put forward their own ideas and to ask for help if they need it. However, many pupils are over-reliant on the teacher. The majority of lessons are characterised by an atmosphere of purposeful activity, though some lessons are not. Some pupils have an interest and enthusiasm for the subject, but others do not, especially older girls. Sometimes, pupils are content simply to copy from the board without really understanding what they are writing, and they complete written tasks, often from worksheets, without knowing or caring about why they are doing so. There are some activities for promoting independent and collaborative learning, including in drama. Drama contributes positively to the social life of the school by staging regular productions. Pupils are given opportunities to visit theatres and the like. Some pupils make good use of the attractive and well-managed library for research and private study.
100. Although leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, there has been unsatisfactory progress made in raising standards in English language since the last inspection. There is good analysis of data to predict pupils' performance, but it is not well used for analysing pupils' progress. Departmental documentation and the scheme of work are of good quality, but planning only covers one year. Systems of monitoring and evaluation have not been used effectively to support teaching and learning. Although there is evidence of the satisfactory improvement of literacy skills in a number of subjects, the management of literacy is unsatisfactory. The monitoring of teaching literacy, and the evaluation of strategies used, is underdeveloped in most subjects.

MATHEMATICS

101. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of 14, 58 per cent of pupils gained Level 5 and above. This was below the average of all schools. Nineteen per cent of pupils gained the higher levels of 6 and above, but this was well below the average of all schools. The trend in the results is upwards, broadly in line with the national trend. When compared to the figures for modern schools nationally the school's results are good.
102. The 2000 GCSE results for A*-C grades are also well below the national average. Twenty-one percent of pupils gained passes at grades A*-C. In the context of other modern schools the results are also low. However, when compared to the pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 3 there is good progress made, especially by the higher-attaining pupils. There is a rising trend over time, with an increase of 12 percentage points in the 1999 figures. In 2000, boys achieved significantly better results than girls. This is contrary to the national figure and a much larger difference than was noticed in the Key Stage 3 examinations of the same group of pupils. There has been some analysis of these results, but no conclusive evidence can be found to explain this difference.
103. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards of work of the higher-attaining pupils are close to and, for some, above national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils, however,

represent only a small proportion of pupils and the standards of most pupils are below those expected nationally. However, all standards are in line with or above the prior attainment of these pupils. Some higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 can use and apply Pythagoras' Theorem, which is Level 7 of the National Curriculum and above the national expectations for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3. Average-attaining pupils can read and interpret timetables and draw conclusions from data. Lower-attaining pupils use and reinforce their numerical skills to calculate areas of simple shapes. Very low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are taught in small groups, which enables their work to be closely matched to their prior attainment and as a result they make good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have well-developed language skills and achieve similar results to their peers.

104. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have built upon the skills and knowledge that have been gained in previous years and follow an examination course that is best suited to their level of prior attainment. Only a few pupils follow the higher-level mathematics course at GCSE level. These pupils are set challenging and different work during lessons to extend the core work covered by the whole class. This targeting of work for individuals is skilfully managed by the class teacher to ensure that pupils are continually stretched. Higher-attaining pupils confidently demonstrate the skills required to solve problems that involve forming and solving quadratic equations. Average-attaining pupils build upon their data handling skills learnt at Key Stage 3 to analyse information and draw conclusions. The lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs reinforce their numerical work by considering percentages and relating these to everyday situations. The department aims to enter all pupils for a GCSE examination in mathematics. For a few of the very low attaining pupils this examination is inappropriate and a certificate of proficiency in arithmetic examination is taken. The writing skills required for an extended coursework task for GCSE examinations are underdeveloped and pupils work their solutions with no fluent explanation of the method or technique used.
105. Numeracy skills are reinforced at both key stages, but there is no clearly planned progression between Years 7 and 11. Pupils are not over-reliant on calculators. In art, opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are not taken. However, some good examples of the development of numeracy skills were seen in science where pupils were confident with the use of units, calculating average values from several observations, and in measuring speed and distance. In design and technology, pupils were able to use simple numeracy knowledge such as weighing. In geography lessons, the use of numeracy skills is developed through the study of maps and the analysis of graphs and tables. However, in geography examinations pupils are less secure with their use of numeracy skills.
106. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and work hard during their lessons. They have managed well during recent staffing difficulties and have developed a degree of independence in their learning. They can discuss their work sensibly with one another and are mutually supportive when they encounter difficulties. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan their lessons well, include material that is relevant to their pupils' experience and foster the very positive attitudes pupils have developed. Pupils' work is neat and their books are kept in a reasonable condition. Pupils use supplied answers responsibly without simply copying them directly
107. All teaching was at least satisfactory, about one third of the lessons seen were good and two lessons were very good. The best lessons start well with exercises that pupils have to complete within a set time, giving them a sense of purpose and encouraging them to work at a good pace. This good start was missing from some of

the lessons that were only satisfactory. Teachers who were very new to the school were not fully aware of all the pupils with special educational needs, but made an effort to ensure that they were not disadvantaged. Teaching was mainly explanation followed by practice, and the range of teaching styles is therefore limited. There was too little group and paired work and pupil interaction was mainly in discussion of questions. On the few occasions that pupils play an active part in lessons they respond well and show confidence, indicating that they are secure in their relationships with their teachers and their peers. Discipline and pupil management are good and teachers use available resources well. Non-specialists teach some classes; but close liaison between the teachers and the head of department helps these classes to make good progress.

108. Since the last inspection there have been several improvements. There has been an improvement in teaching, which has resulted in a rise in examination results at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. Pupils do experience some of the awe and wonder of mathematics when using computers to model the solution of equations and some of the display work in the department helps this. The information available on pupils' levels of attainment is now used to put them into groups when they enter the school and to provide suitable work for them. Regular review of pupils' progress makes it easy to change sets if it is needed. Staffing difficulties mean that the desired improvements to marking and subsequent feedback to pupils have not happened.
109. The head of department is relatively new to the post and manages the department well. There is a new scheme of work at Key Stage 3 and currently there is an ongoing review of the scheme for GCSE to aid the improvement in examination results. The lack of sufficient full-time permanent staff is causing difficulties with continuity. Because of these difficulties, the current head of department has had to focus on sustaining the day-to-day running of the department and at present there is no long-term development plan in place.

SCIENCE

110. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests, 38 per cent of pupils reached Level 5 and above at the age of 14. This is well below the average for all schools. Only 6 per cent of all pupils gained Level 6 or above, which is also well below the national average. Compared to modern schools, pupils' performance is also low. However, the new head of department is providing very good leadership and performance in science is now improving. More pupils are now gaining Levels 5 and above than they were at the time of the previous inspection.
111. The number of pupils gaining a GCSE grade of A*-C was well below the national average. Compared to modern schools, standards are also low. In Key Stage 4, just under 39 per cent of pupils taking double certification GCSE science obtained a grade of A*-C. However, only 13 pupils from a cohort of 89 took this examination; the other 76 pupils followed a single science course and 13 per cent of these pupils obtained a grade A*-C. Overall therefore, 17 per cent of pupils obtained a grade of A*-C compared to the national figure of 46 per cent. The number of pupils gaining grades A*-C is similar to other modern schools in Slough. Although well below the national figure, the trend at Key Stage 4 is upwards having increased from a figure of just 2 per cent of pupils gaining grades A*-C in science two years ago. When the performance of boys in science is compared to girls at GCSE the pattern seen is the opposite to Key Stage 3 results, with the boys achieving a higher number of A*-C passes. Analysis of the modular Year 10 results indicate that this will be reversed next year.

112. By the age of 14, the work of the higher-attaining pupils is close to and, for some, above the expected national standard. Pupils progress well from Year 7 to Year 9. Some higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 can discuss and calculate the speed of objects from measuring the time taken to travel a certain distance. They are confident with the use of units and are aware of the advantages of calculating average values from several observations. Those pupils whose attainment is average for the end of Key Stage 3 understand the process of photosynthesis and know that oxygen is one of the products. These pupils were also able to recall a variety of uses for artificial satellites including communications, monitoring pollution and for producing maps. The lower-attaining pupils could recall the gases that cause the greenhouse effect and the effects it has on climate change. They understood that this effect was, in the main, caused by burning fossil fuels and that there was a need to reduce the use of non-renewable fuels. In Key Stage 3, pupils with special educational needs are well supported in science with detailed lesson planning and often with the support of additional staff. When they are present, the support staff circulate around the laboratory and offer help to other pupils in a very constructive manner. These support staff are aware of the needs of the pupils and of their particular, specific requirements, in science. Pupils who have English as an additional language were at no disadvantage in science and could understand the aims of the lessons. In some lessons, these pupils were able to follow the instructions by being supported by an additional member of staff.
113. The higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 can design and perform investigations on the various factors that affect the rate of photosynthesis. They are able to identify the conditions needed to make their investigations 'fair' and evaluate their results before drawing conclusions. A group of pupils in a Year 10 class studying radioactivity were able to recall the different types of radiation and their associated properties, such as structure and penetration. Most pupils in this group could also calculate half-lives for different isotopes. The more-able pupils at Key Stage 4 were well catered for within the streamed system. In some lessons, there were additional material and exercises for these pupils to enhance their learning. Although staff know who the more able pupils are, procedures to identify such pupils formally have not been developed. Further work will be necessary to ensure these pupils are motivated and achieve their full potential. Higher and average attaining pupils could understand and discuss aspects of genetics. Lower-attaining pupils could describe the physical properties of metals and their uses. They were able to arrange metals in activity series order from observations, but were not taught why the metals reacted differently.
114. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory in most lessons observed and good, or very good, in many. The groups containing the higher-attaining pupils in Years 8 to 11 consistently show the best attitude to learning. Pupils learn best when the teacher's expectations are high and there is good classroom control. The most successful lessons are those planned in distinct sections, requiring various changes of approach or activity, and including some practical aspect. Pupils also show a willingness to answer questions and join in with class discussions. Examples of this were during a review of the mutation in peppered moths during a Year 11 lesson, where pupils gave a presentation to the class, and a Year 9 group taking part in a revision quiz. Pupils show good attitudes to practical work especially when they clearly understand exactly what they have to do. Pupils work in a safe and careful manner. Pupils in all years do not always complete the written work in science, even when instructed to by staff. This gives rise to revision notes that are incomplete and have a detrimental effect on attainment. This is a particular problem with lower-attaining boys, especially in Years 9 -11. The department has plans to introduce a system in their marking policy to reduce this effect.

115. Overall teaching in the department is now satisfactory. It was good, or very good, in over one third of the lessons observed. Lesson preparation and organisation of resources is always of a high standard. Every lesson starts in a similar manner with a register being taken followed by an explanation of the aims for that lesson. Although their subject knowledge is strong, staff are aware of the need for further training, especially in the physical sciences, to enable them to improve the teaching of all aspects of science to the groups they have been allocated. The most effective teaching is in Year 10 where the pupils follow a relevant modular course and are aware of their attainment and progress. However, some tasks are not stimulating; they are too simple and do not extend the pupils' knowledge. This leads to a loss of concentration and some misbehaviour. One example of this was in a Year 9 lesson when pupils were asked to colour in a diagram, but were not told what its significance was. The department needs to examine lesson planning to ensure the tasks set to pupils are appropriate and with sufficient material to extend the more-able pupils. There are now more activities for pupils to increase their problem solving, analytical and investigational skills throughout both key stages following the introduction of new teaching programmes.
116. Most pupils do not yet follow double certification GCSE science in Key Stage 4. The modular science GCSE course is appropriate and has been enhanced with more learning activities. New courses in Key Stage 3 have had a similar positive effect on the pupils because they use a wider range of teaching styles and approaches. The use of information technology within the department is good and has added a further dimension to the teaching of science. There are many activities during both Key Stages 3 and 4 where pupils are able to use and develop both literacy and numeracy skills in science. The marking of pupils' books is done on a regular basis following both the departmental and school guidelines. Written comments are made in addition to praise for good work. All the science teachers follow the school system for grading work, with an effort and achievement grade at the end of a section of work. However, where future targets are set there is insufficient monitoring of these by staff with the result that the pupils do not achieve the targets set. There is no detailed analytical assessment within the department that staff could use to determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning or use to raise the attainment of the pupils. The department must improve their ongoing assessment scheme to overcome this. Homework is set regularly and is an integral part of the lesson plans. It is usually relevant and a useful extension of the work carried out in class.
117. The management of the department is very good and has been a major factor in raising the attainment of pupils. Accommodation is good with three well-equipped laboratories and one other needing some refurbishment. The laboratories are well maintained by an efficient support staff. The staff and technicians are aware of the health and safety regulations and a full risk assessment has been performed. The department has addressed most of the issues raised from the previous inspection report in a positive manner. The department no longer has the serious weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report.

ART AND DESIGN

118. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was below national expectations. There was a very wide variation in the performance of boys and girls. Currently, pupils in Year 9 approaching the end of Key Stage 3 achieve standards that are in line with national expectations. Teachers encourage pupils to develop sound research skills at the start of each topic. Pupils learn about the lives and times of artists from the European traditions and other cultures, both ancient and more

contemporary. For example, pupils in Year 8 used the story of Medusa from ancient Greek mythology to research aspects of theatre and characterisation.

119. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, only 13 per cent of pupils gained the higher A*-C grades. This was a slight decrease from the results of the previous year when they had fallen significantly. The results are well below the national average and do not compare favourably with other modern schools. This represents a considerable fall in standards since the previous inspection and is unsatisfactory. The school's analysis of examination results shows that girls outperform boys, which reflects the national picture. In order to address the issue, teachers have recently introduced topics that offer a more direct appeal to boys as well as girls. A significant number of pupils have a casual attitude to regular school attendance and this shows in the frequently occurring gaps in their coursework presentation portfolios. This habit negates the sound, step-by-step teaching programmes offered by teachers, and pupils do not have the time to develop the essential skills, knowledge and understanding which lead to the higher examination grades.
120. Across Key Stage 3 teachers set suitable homework tasks to extend pupils' research skills, as well as their personal art capability. Pupils are familiar with the different characteristics of major art movements, such as Impressionism, Expressionism and Surrealism. This knowledge enables pupils to make useful comparisons between their own work and the paintings, sculptures and objects that other artists and cultures have produced. Teachers effectively encourage pupils to learn and use good levels of language, which enables them to evaluate and describe artwork, and to use a range of correct technical terms with which to discuss and appreciate issues relating to art. This shows good improvement since the previous inspection, where it was criticised. There is wide use of sketchbooks throughout the school and evidence of good teaching of skills, particularly in the application of paints and pigments. Although teachers offer frequent reminders, pupils do not put enough effort into careful, disciplined observation, before embarking on drawings and often make dispiriting mistakes. Some pupils have experienced a narrow range of art activities before they come to the school and their strategies for drawing are often immature and underdeveloped. Teachers try hard to redress the balance, which takes up valuable time.
121. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are unsatisfactory. Many pupils are content to rely on secondary source materials, such as magazines and books, instead of taking a more personal and creative approach, which would enable them to depict their own ideas better. Teachers encourage analytical approaches to still life drawing, by providing interesting collections of objects, such as seashells, plant forms and musical instruments. They do not, however, consistently teach the skills needed for pupils to improve, for example, their skills in rendering three-dimensional, solid objects on a two-dimensional surface. A few pupils show interest in trying to depict more abstract, spiritual ideas and incorporate them into paintings. Pupils in Year 11, for example, recently took the idea of portraying what happens in the mind when in the act of prayer, a difficult idea to illustrate. Pupils devised personal ways of depicting ideas such as sanctity and the potential power of goodness over evil and oppression. They did this by combining conventional portraiture with more symbolic representations of abstract notions. This project effectively linked their skills in art with their wider understanding of religious education. Many projects that have been undertaken in art lessons contain direct references to learning in mathematics, but teachers do not always bring this to the attention of pupils. The result is that they miss the chance of organising tasks that would reinforce pupils' learning in mathematics. Good quality teaching of practical, constructional skills in ceramics was seen during the inspection. Pupils in Year 10 developed their own thoughtfully

observed drawings of fruit into designs for hollow ware. They followed carefully the teacher's capable demonstrations and clear instructions. This exercise held pupils' attention well, as they developed and improved their own manipulative and modelling skills. Teachers try to build pupils' self-confidence by praising effort as well as capability and this enables all pupils to take a pride in their work.

122. Following the previous inspection report, the governors appointed a head of department. She has sound ideas for improvement in the subject and has worked hard to implement new courses linked to the National Curriculum Orders. Topics are planned to link with previous work to help pupils to make systematic progress. Good practice is generously shared between teachers in the department so that they can benefit from each other's specialist expertise. Teachers monitor each other's teaching and give useful feedback for improvement. The school has followed national priorities for in-service training and concentrated on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Because of this, teachers in the department have not benefited from recent training, but they have been quick to avail themselves of the skills required in information and communication technology, to help pupils in Year 10 to make good use of the digital camera and computers. This enables them to generate and manipulate images on the screen, to print them off and use them as starting points for their own work. Pupils in Year 11 effectively use the Internet to gain access to and research famous works of art, which they use to inform their own drawings and paintings. Teachers plan lessons, taking into account the individual learning plans for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Such pupils are well integrated into lessons and make good progress. The few boys with behavioural problems in Years 8 and 9 sometimes pose difficulties for themselves and others. The school does not provide extra support for them in art lessons and this can be a constraint to progress at times, especially when pupils are engaged in written research topics as well as in practical sessions.
123. Teachers have a caring and inclusive manner with pupils. There is an open-door policy towards pupils using art room facilities during most lunch times and after school, under careful supervision. Pupils use these times well to finish work or co-operate on projects such as a mural depicting sport throughout the school, or paint scenery for the school's drama productions. Teachers encourage pupils to show respect for each other's ideas and work. Pupils respond well to their teachers and to each other, they share materials sensibly and clear away amicably at the end of sessions. Pupils are generally keen and enthusiastic in art lessons and those who recently visited the Victoria and Albert Museum were able to speak with interest, and recall clearly what they learned and enjoyed most about the visit.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was below the national average. Attainment levels are broadly in line with those of modern schools. Teacher assessments indicate an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. More girls than boys attain the higher levels, which is in line with national trends. Pupils know that heat can be used to change materials properties - for example, when making choux pastry in food technology. However, the resistant materials project does not allow for pupils to work according to their prior attainment and offers insufficient opportunities for pupils to incorporate their own design ideas. The department is aware that this unit of work requires revision. Pupils can carry out a survey of users preferences as part of the design process in textiles.
125. The attainment of 16-year-olds in the 2000 GCSE examinations is below the national average. Overall, 38 percent of pupils gained A*-C grades, which is in line with

results for modern schools. There has been a rising trend overall, with the percentage of A*-C passes doubling from 1998 to 2000. These results are significantly better than in other subjects. In the graphic products, resistant materials and textiles technology examinations, results at A*-C exceeded those for modern schools, but for food technology results were well below. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils studying for the current food technology examination are likely to do better this year.

126. In Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress with their learning, leading to attainment in Years 7 and 8 being near to the national expectation. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 8 develop skills well when investigating a range of decorative techniques for an item to be made of fabric. The course structure leads pupils in a Year 8 resistant materials class to develop a satisfactory understanding of technical terms. They are able to use simple numeracy knowledge such as weighing in grams to aid their work in food technology.
127. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils work with due regard to safety and hygiene in food technology. They are aware of the major criteria to be used when testing food products and know two methods of comparing such results. They are not, however, aware of the full range of tests that can be used. Higher-attaining pupils in a Year 11 resistant materials class know that quality is an aspect of designing which must form part of a specification and must be measured by evaluation of the final product. The majority of pupils understand the differences between batch and mass production. In graphic products, pupils use machines with safety and confidence, for example, to make wheels for a model. However, they do not have sufficient technical knowledge of the machines and materials they are using. Pupils exhibit very good levels of independence when using information and communication technology to aid their work; for example, when using a design program to produce surface developments for packaging. The presentation of work is enhanced by the use of a digital camera to record results. In textiles, pupils make good use of three-dimensional modelling techniques and are able to replicate industrial practices when producing designs. Pupils in all courses are able to produce a range of ideas based on prior research. However, there is a need for a clearer indication of the reasons for their selection from this range and some development of the chosen idea before manufacture.
128. In Key Stage 4, pupils make satisfactory progress with their learning. In food technology, pupils make good progress where previous teaching has led them to be very competent and capable in the food preparation areas. As a consequence they are able to work independently and use time very well. In Year 10 resistant materials, pupils have a poor grasp of technical terms relating to tools and materials. This class has been adversely affected by previous staffing shortages. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress. The way that teaching groups are organised, additional support, where it is available, and staff awareness of these pupils' needs make a valuable contribution to this progress.
129. There is very good use of information and communication technology to help pupils' learning and to indicate the correct structures for their work. In Key Stage 4, pupils have clear guidance on how their work is assessed and how they can improve their grades. These have been key factors in the improvement of GCSE results. The workstations, including Internet access, facilities for desktop publishing and design, are well used, particularly in Key Stage 4. Software designed to control on-screen devices is currently being trialled, but there is a lack of computer numeric control equipment for use in both key stages. Staffing has improved. In the recent past, lack of sufficient staff has had a negative impact, evident in the current work of some

pupils. The two technicians are valuable members of the department, both in terms of organisation and the direct help they give to pupils.

130. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory. In both key stages, about one third of teaching was good. In Key Stage 3, it was very good in one quarter of lessons observed. In Key Stage 4, it was very good in one half of lessons seen. All teachers have a good knowledge of their specialisms, often used well when questions are posed effectively to reinforce and extend pupils' prior knowledge, as in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson. Where the teacher has a good knowledge of individual pupils' capabilities, as in a Year 11 textiles lesson, work is pitched at the right level. Good rapport with pupils leads to good use of time. Pupils are used well to assist when reinforcing knowledge of the values of electrical resistors in Year 7. Teaching is less successful when too long is spent on a theoretical element followed immediately by a practical demonstration as in a Year 7 lesson. This leads to pupils losing concentration and their progress is inhibited. Where there is an over-reliance on the class teacher as a source of information, learning is less effective. This was seen in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson.
131. Good management has led to improved examination results and has successfully carried the department through the disruption caused by the refurbishment of the resistant materials areas. There is a clear sense of unified approach by members of the department. The departmental development plan correctly identifies appropriate priorities, but there needs to be a greater emphasis on cost implications of proposed initiatives and possible strategies for achieving the targets. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and now includes work using metal, an issue raised in the previous report. There is still a need to include structures and work with pneumatics systems. Now that the department has the full complement of teaching and support staff there is expertise for these elements to be included. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. The department is aware of the need to offer courses that are more suited to some pupils, and is currently reviewing other options with this in mind. Assessment in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory, but not yet used to inform curriculum planning.
132. The refurbishment of the resistant materials areas has led to suitable teaching areas, but some of the machinery lacks the necessary safety switches. The safe working areas around them are not delineated. There is still a problem with the food technology room overheating in the summer, an issue raised in the previous inspection report, and this room has no fire escape.

GEOGRAPHY

133. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was in line with the national average and pupils achieve satisfactory rates of progress.
134. In 2000, 25 per cent of pupils gained GCSE passes at grades A*-C. This is below the national average. However, standards are near to those achieved nationally by pupils in modern schools. Pupils achieve satisfactory rates of progress as they move through this key stage. The good teaching in Key Stage 4 raises standards of attainment in a number of lessons to be near the national average.
135. Since the inspection in 1998, standards in Key Stage 3 have risen. A greater number of pupils now achieve levels of attainment that match age-related expectations. This is as a result of the quality of teaching and the care taken to ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils have adequate knowledge and understanding in this subject and they develop the necessary skills. For example, pupils in Year 9 know

the principal factors that impact upon tourism in the Peak District. They know tourists contribute to the local economy, but can harm the environment. Most pupils have a secure understanding of map reading; for example, they use six figure co-ordinates accurately to locate specific features. In other work, they consider conservation issues, studying rhinos in Zimbabwe and the impact of weathering upon coastlines. Where work is less successful, pupils write in insufficient detail. Some diagrammatic work lacks care.

136. There are clear benefits in the arrangements for organising classes into ability groups in Years 8 and 9. These help to raise standards by ensuring that tasks are more carefully matched to the pupils' abilities. More-able pupils are challenged by detailed questioning and complex tasks. In other groups, time is taken to ensure that pupils fully understand specific issues before they move onto new work. Pupils with special educational needs are given work that closely matches their targets. In all sets, pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and a number of them achieve high standards. The single sex classes for more-able pupils in Year 9 are now well established and good standards are being maintained. For example, pupils in the girls' group display a clear understanding of the causes of an earthquake. One pupil perceptively suggests that "little tremors can lead to large eruptions".
137. Younger pupils in the key stage develop their skills at varying rates. In Year 7, they practise marking towns on a printed map, using an atlas to locate them first. However, only the more-able pupils confidently use all the clues given. For example, a number of pupils fail to locate Nottingham on the River Trent. In Year 8, pupils in the upper sets demonstrate a clear understanding of the lives of the Masai people in Kenya. They make judgements on the quality of town and rural life. In other groups, work is detailed, but mainly descriptive.
138. Pupils in Key Stage 4 work in mixed ability groups. The significant increase in numbers in Year 10 illustrates the increasing popularity of the subject. Between 1998-2000 GCSE results varied, with fewer pupils achieving the higher grades in 2000 than in 1998. However, the small cohorts of pupils each year make valid comparisons difficult. Last year one pupil gained an A* grade, the best individual result achieved during the three-year period. In the three lessons seen, standards achieved broadly matched what is expected of pupils at this age. In Year 10, pupils understand the main reasons for the migration of the rural poor into cities. When studying a ski resort, pupils recognise why avalanches occur and know why deforestation can make this more likely. However, pupils do not always explain such situations clearly enough. This lack of fluency is also found in some pieces of written work. Most pupils can interpret data competently, for example in analysing a population pyramid.
139. In Year 11, pupils demonstrate an understanding of why earthquakes occur. They know how rescue operations are conducted and recognise contributory factors to high death tolls, such as poorly constructed buildings. A number of pupils do not write in sufficient detail to gain full marks in practice examination questions. In this key stage, most pupils achieve satisfactory standards in lessons and respond well to the stimulus of good teaching. However, a number of pupils struggle to maintain these standards under examination conditions, where other factors, such as factual recall, literacy and numeracy skills have a greater impact.
140. The most important influence upon pupils' work is the overall standard of teaching in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory overall with examples of good and very good teaching. The principle strengths of teaching here are a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, good pupil management and the clear

presentation of information. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, there was careful attention to vocabulary, imaginative tasks were set and planning was good. Where teaching could improve, activities did not involve discussion enough, particularly with more-able pupils. Tasks set do not always develop skills sequentially; for example, in mapping exercises.

141. In Key Stage 4, teaching is mostly good. Information is presented clearly, with great attention to detail, for example, with the use of vocabulary and technical language. Careful questioning helps consolidate learning well, though on occasion it does not always extend learning sufficiently. Where the questioning is most effective, pupils are actively engaged in dialogue. Because they can talk about their ideas, their learning improves. Explanations are clear and well supported by resources. For instance, a clear diagram showed the cause of an avalanche and a video showed rescue attempts in an earthquake zone. A particular feature throughout the school is the great care taken to reinforce learning by reviewing homework. This review identifies gaps in pupils' knowledge and helps planning effectively. During the inspection, all classes were taught well. However, the overall range of teaching techniques was somewhat narrow with insufficient tasks being created for discussion.
142. The overall impact of this competent teaching throughout the school is that pupils learn at a satisfactory and, sometimes, good rate. They consolidate knowledge and information, develop their vocabulary and acquire new skills, for example, in analysing data. Most pupils are conscientious and work hard to improve their understanding in this subject. A significant number lack confidence in oral work and do not always present their ideas with sufficient clarity. Behaviour is good and most pupils display mature attitudes towards their learning and to one another. This reflects the good relationships in place and skilful pupil management by staff.
143. A strength of the curriculum is that it offers all pupils the possibility to make progress, partly through its attention to detail and by the provision of differing tasks matched to ability. For example, GCSE candidates are entered for different papers according to their overall past progress. An updated scheme of work is in place and pupils' progress is well supported by sound assessment procedures. Increasingly, information and communication technology contributes to pupils' learning and geography makes a sound contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The head of department provides good leadership. He is a confident teacher and gives good help to his colleague in the department. This includes reviewing planning and lesson observations. The overall monitoring of teaching is good, with senior staff providing help and advice. There is a clear commitment to raising standards.

HISTORY

144. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was in line with the national average and pupils achieve satisfactory and sometimes good rates of progress in lessons. In Year 9, there are examples of high attainment, but also examples of low attainment. Overall, attainment is now significantly higher than at the time of the previous inspection, representing good progress over time. This is because the quality of teaching is good.
145. In 2000, 28 per cent of pupils studying GCSE achieved passes at grades A*-C. This is below the national average. However, standards are near to those achieved nationally in modern schools. In this key stage, pupils achieve satisfactory rates of progress over time, with examples of good progress in some lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Where

they benefit from specific support progress is good. Pupils whose first language is not English make good progress throughout the school, and a number are rightly placed in the top sets.

146. The most able pupils in Year 9 achieve high standards. For example, they carefully analyse conditions in 19th Century industrial towns and clearly identify their impact upon society. Pupils are aware of other factors that bring about change. By studying the growth of empire they recognise the tensions and rivalries which contributed to the causes of the First World War. In a lesson studying attitudes at the time, pupils use photographs effectively to recognise and discuss contrasting emotions. They demonstrate an awareness of vocabulary, using such words as 'patriotic' to describe what they see. Elsewhere in Year 9, standards are in line with those expected for pupils of this age, although a minority of pupils achieve low standards. Here, pupils have difficulty explaining their ideas clearly and lack an overall understanding of events. They know some aspects of vocabulary, such as 'republic.' In Key Stage 3, attainment is sometimes raised above expectations by very good teaching. For example, in a Year 8 lower set, a pupil offers a concise, well judged definition of the 'divine right of kings.' Pupils in the mixed Year 7 classes improve their understanding of specific eras. When studying the Norman Conquest, most pupils recognise the principle changes that occurred. The more-able pupils have a secure knowledge of how land was distributed and why. However, many other pupils do not really understand the relationship between service and land. Overall, the arrangements for grouping pupils in this key stage do contribute to raising standards and are particularly successful with the top sets.
147. Pupils in Key Stage 4 work in mixed ability sets. Between 1998-2000 GCSE results varied, with the best overall achievement in A*-C grades occurring in 1999. However, the small cohorts make comparisons difficult and a number of more-able Year 9 pupils in 1998 did not continue with the subject. This is because history only appears in one option block for pupils moving into Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 10 have a sound understanding of the Soviet 'Five Year Plans'. They can identify success and failure and recognise the role of propaganda to raise production levels. In earlier work, the more-able pupils write in substantial detail about the Russian Revolution and produce a detailed analysis of its main events. However, some other work by pupils does not have enough interpretation of detail to achieve high marks.
148. Pupils in Year 11 study a range of topics from the 'inter-war' and 'post-war' periods. In practice examination questions, they consider the defeat of Germany in 1918 and the rise of Nazism. Individual written work varies in quality, with the more-able pupils achieving standards within the A-C GCSE range. In a lesson on the Korean War, pupils discuss the notion of 'containment'. Most know the sequence of events leading to war and the role of the United Nations. They know that the 38th Parallel forms a border, but they are less sure why this is so. Most pupils have a greater knowledge of Russia and America's role than that of China and this initially weakens their overall understanding of the situation. Many pupils also are unaware of the extent of British involvement. However, through discussion and group research, pupils make rapid progress during the lesson. They are able to express their ideas of whether 'containment' succeeded or not. This focus on discussion effectively promotes thinking and helps clarify understanding, so that a number of pupils put forward valid arguments to support their judgements.
149. There is a clear link between the standards being achieved and the good and very good teaching that occurs in both key stages. Both members of staff have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. Throughout Key Stage 3, and especially very effectively in Years 8 and 9, care is taken to match tasks to ability.

Questioning skills are good. For example, in Year 7 good questioning helps pupils to focus on the text of the Domesday Book; in Year 8 it helps them to develop an understanding of the English Civil War. There is a careful focus on vocabulary and the use of homework to extend knowledge. In Year 9, a very good lesson involved the use of photographs to explore attitudes to war. Here, pupils were encouraged to consider how changing events influence attitudes, such as mounting casualties causing both despair and determination. On occasion, in some lower set classes, there is not enough consolidation of initial learning. For instance, oral work is not always reinforced on the whiteboard and there is some inconsistency in promoting a summary discussion.

150. In the two lessons observed in Key Stage 4, the standard of teaching was very good. Clear objectives are set; for example, differing group tasks on 'Stalin' maximise the amount of work covered. This is then drawn together very effectively through a very good final discussion involving all pupils. A particular feature of this very good teaching is the quality of relationships that underpin discussion. This enables tasks to be organised efficiently and helps maintain a good lesson pace. A particular feature in Year 11 is the careful attention paid to setting objectives that match GCSE requirements. This demonstrates a secure understanding of examination criteria by staff. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own efforts and suggest what marks might be awarded. The high standards of teaching in this key stage are found particularly where pupils are given good opportunities to become active learners and to collaborate with one another. This has a direct impact upon their learning, improving pupils' thinking skills and confidence in their own abilities.
151. The good standards in teaching also impact upon pupils' attitudes and behaviour, so that in all year groups pupils work hard to complete tasks. On occasions, they are too passive, but many are capable of joining in discussion. Older pupils often display responsible attitudes towards learning. This is seen through the completion of independent tasks, which include group discussion, individual research and homework.
152. The history curriculum offers all pupils sound opportunities to make progress. In Key Stage 3, the arrangement of teaching groups allows specific tasks to be matched to ability. In Key Stage 4, most pupils are entered for the GCSE examination and a Certificate of Achievement is also available. A suitable scheme of work is in place. There is good provision for educational visits and older pupils visit the Western Front in France and Belgium. This promotes their social development well. A history club provides interest and help to groups of pupils at lunchtime. Assessment arrangements are good. Thorough procedures are in place, pupils are mentored and encouraged to evaluate their own progress. The head of department provides good leadership. She is committed to raising standards and promotes her department energetically. Some thorough monitoring procedures are used, which provide good advice on teaching. The areas for development that will impact upon learning and raise standards include continued development of pupils' oral work and greater use of information and communication technology. The departmental development plan is weak in defining the financial resources required to bring about improvement. Overall, the department has achieved a good improvement since the last inspection, especially by raising standards in Key Stage 3.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

153. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was below the national average, but in line with that of modern schools. In the small sample of lessons seen, pupils achieve in line with what is expected for pupils of this age when handling and communicating information. Work with data logging in science and the use of spreadsheets in mathematics for solving problems also lead to pupils attaining at the appropriate level. Recently obtained software for computer control is used in design and technology. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 now meets statutory requirements, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. In Key Stage 3, pupils learn very well. Good use of information and communication technology equipment for collecting data in Year 7 science leads to pupils making good progress both with their knowledge of science and with understanding the function of sensors. Pupils' very good attitudes to work, for example when working in groups in Year 8, lead to effective learning as they exchange and test ideas with each other.
154. Pupils' attainment at the age of 16 is well below national expectations. Only pupils studying for examinations have timetabled lessons and there is no provision to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 4 have access to the information and communication technology curriculum to which they have an entitlement. Statutory requirements are not met in this key stage. In 2000, 14 pupils were entered for the information technology examination. Of these pupils, 36 per cent obtained grades A*-C, compared to the national average of 53.9 per cent and average for modern schools of 42.1 per cent. All pupils attained in the range A*-G, which is above the average for modern schools. Pupils obtained significantly higher results than in their other subjects. Pupils in the current Year 11 examination group are keen to succeed and are well motivated to make up for their lack of previous progress attributable to staffing difficulties. In lessons, they are able to produce work of very good quality for a particular audience, combining text and graphics to form leaflets. Pupils use data collected from questionnaires they have produced and interpret this with the aid of pie and bar charts, but at a simple level. They can use spreadsheets and enter formulae for simple calculations, but are not familiar with the special features expected at this age. In business studies, pupils produce a presentation, combining graphics with music, which is at a suitable level. Pupils use information communication technology in Key Stage 4 very effectively in design and technology, as a research tool, for designing, and interpretation and presentation of results. Information and communication technology is also used well in physical education to produce high quality coursework folders. Pupils make good use of the Internet as a research tool as a starting point for their own investigations in art. However, as information and communication technology is not yet co-ordinated across all subjects in Key Stage 4 pupils' progress is unsatisfactory because not all pupils have access to all of the areas of study.
155. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others pupils in lessons. Where there is support, for example in a Year 7 lesson, pupils make good progress. Where pupils have direct access via special educational needs facilities they make good progress and produce work of a similar quality to that of others.
156. In the four lessons observed, all teaching was at least good and three lessons were very good or better. Teaching is very effective when high expectations to produce work of good quality are made clear. In Year 7, pupils are highly motivated by this, plus the opportunity to use a digital camera, and as a result make excellent progress with a desktop publishing task. The use of information about pupils' prior attainment is taken into account to give effective starting points to topics.
157. Assessment systems in Key Stage 3 are satisfactory, but at the moment there is no co-ordination of assessments made by other departments. There is no overall system

in place for Key Stage 4 and the use of assessment to inform planning is unsatisfactory. The most recent reports to parents did not comply with requirements for information and communication technology.

158. There are enough specialist staff for lessons currently timetabled. The new subject leader has had a direct impact by raising the standards of pupils' work in the short time he has been in post. The recently appointed network manager is also having a very positive effect on the provision and availability of facilities throughout the school. Many of the issues raised in the previous inspection report have been addressed and the department is now well placed to move forward. Development planning clearly identifies suitable priorities, which include strategies to give pupils in Key Stage 4 better access to this part of the curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory and there is increasing usage of the two main rooms by other departments. Facilities in the library and design and technology department are used well, as are those in science. There are appropriate resources to aid the teaching of music. Some internal training is taking place and firm planning is in place for more. There has been large investment in information and communication technology recently, but the ratio of computers to pupils is still well below average for secondary schools. Planning shows that more are to be obtained.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

159. Since the last inspection, standards in French have improved. A newly appointed head of department is giving very good leadership. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was above the standard expected nationally at the age of 14 years.
160. In the 2000 GCSE examinations, 29 per cent of pupils gained the higher A*-C grades. This is well below the average of schools nationally and below the average for modern schools. Almost all pupils are entered for the language at GCSE. All pupils gain at least a grade G, including those pupils with statements of special educational need. The attainment levels of girls are above those of boys.
161. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils were achieving at levels in line with or better than national expectations in half of the lessons. At Key Stage 3 standards are good. At Key Stage 4 standards are satisfactory. Where pupils were achieving well, they were able to remember words and phrases in French and rework them to suit the new context in which they were working. A good example of this was in a Year 8 lesson when pupils played a game using the phrases they had learned about daily routine in the previous lesson. Pupils' writing was accurate and older pupils could use grammatical constructions like verb tenses and possessive adjectives. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson were able to work from a text using 'I' and 'my' and describe what 'she' was doing both quickly and accurately. Pupils at all levels were happy to answer questions and to speak French, but their accents were often not very good. In many cases, the pupils with the best accents were those who already spoke a language other than English at home.
162. Pupils clearly enjoy French and they behave well in most lessons, try hard and take part willingly. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Where attitudes to the subject were best, pupils worked well in pairs and spoke French even when the teacher was not listening directly to them. Girls and boys were prepared to work together and to help each other. A lower ability group of Year 8 pupils enjoyed the

competition in a game and tried very hard to speak the language correctly. Others worked with enthusiasm at listening exercises.

163. Overall teaching is good and promotes good learning. Lessons are delivered with pace and are purposeful. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson seen and was good or better in two thirds of them. In lessons where teaching was very good or excellent, a variety of ways were used for pupils to practise the language they were learning. Pupils played games, competed with one another and, in one case, listened to a song while filling in blanks on a transcript. Older pupils were given the chance to work independently. For example, in a Year 9 reading lesson they chose the books themselves and completed a critique on what they had read. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were expected to construct a conversation, in groups, from known elements of language about part-time jobs. In another Year 10 lesson, pupils worked with computers to correct and reconstruct a piece of written French they had studied. This led to a high level of accuracy as they struggled not to lose points. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the subject as the work they are asked to do is challenging yet within their capabilities. Those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress as their skills in speaking the language are often better than those of other pupils and their reading, writing and listening skills are at least as good.
164. In almost all lessons, even the most difficult pupils were very well controlled so that all could take part in the lesson and make progress in their learning. Most lessons included tasks for pupils to listen, speak, read and write. In all lessons seen, teachers organised pupils and gave them their instructions in French, which gave pupils even more opportunity to hear the language spoken. They were also expected to answer the register, to apologise if they were late and to attract the teacher's attention using the language. One area in which teachers could improve pupils' learning still further is to give them increased activities to repeat correct answers in French during question and answer sessions.
165. Opportunities for learning in the subject are good. The National Curriculum requirements are being met in lessons with a range of interesting activities available to interest and motivate pupils. The department has invested in additional materials for work with the least-able pupils. There is a breakfast revision club where pupils who will sit their GCSE examinations this year are able to use computers to revise areas of work as well as being able to get individual help from teachers. At the end of last year, Year 10 pupils had the opportunity to take part in a video conference with French speakers overseas and there are plans to make this a regular occurrence. A theatre group is booked to come to the school to present a play in French and a visit to France is planned for later this year.
166. Leadership in the subject is good. The head of department took up her post recently, but has already begun to make a big impact on pupils' learning.

MUSIC

167. Attainment in the 2000 teacher assessments at the age of 14 was broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils have a good knowledge of chords. They understand how to play them and how to use the notes of chords to compose a bass line, melody and accompaniment. Pupils' skills in using staff notation to record their pieces have improved since the last inspection as they refer regularly to the information in their exercise books. The lack of challenge in Year 9 means that singing is not well developed. However, the quality of singing is good. Evidence of tape-recorded work shows that pupils are developing good ensemble skills. Pupils write effective

evaluations of their composing and performing, showing good knowledge and understanding of music vocabulary and including ways in which they could improve. A few pupils use music sequencing software on the computers successfully to record and improve their compositions. Although in the most recent teacher assessments there was a wide variation between the performance of boys and girls, no significant differences were observed in work seen. Likewise there is no significant difference between pupils of different minority ethnic groups. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in lessons and make good progress.

168. GCSE music was introduced after the previous inspection. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study the GCSE music course together after school for one hour each week. At the time of the inspection there was not enough evidence to provide a secure overall judgement on attainment by the age of 16 years. However, pupils' attainment in composing is in line with expectations.
169. The quality of teaching in music is good. Teachers manage pupils effectively and as a result pupils behave well in lessons. They make frequent and effective use of musical vocabulary, which reinforces pupils' knowledge and understanding of technical terms. They make good use of the resources available including computers and pupils work well together in groups and sharing keyboards. Homework is regularly set to reinforce what has been learned in the lesson and is very successful in developing pupils' literacy skills. Where teaching is particularly effective, teachers question pupils skilfully, which encourages them to think independently and reinforces their learning. Lessons are also well planned and integrate composing and performing activities so that pupils' skills in these areas are regularly practised and developed. However, appraising activities to develop pupils' understanding of strengths and weaknesses are not always sufficiently well integrated. In lessons where teaching is less effective, worksheets for listening activities are not sufficiently adapted to pupils' different levels of attainment and consequently pupils do not always make enough gains in their listening skills. Also the teacher does not identify the specific musical skills or knowledge to be learned and spends too much time on the same activity with the result that pupils lose interest. Teaching in instrumental lessons is very good and pupils make very good progress in their lessons.
170. The department is well led by a committed and enthusiastic head of department. Schemes of work are in place to aid teaching, but have not been sufficiently adapted to cater for pupils' different levels of attainment and do not yet include planning for the use of music technology. The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' work are satisfactory. However, assessment results are not yet used to set targets for pupils to improve their musical learning. Strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills are good and include the use of key words around the rooms and in exercise books. Since the last inspection, the music accommodation has greatly improved with the building of a suite of rooms and is well resourced with a range of percussion instruments, keyboards and six computers. A hut is used as a second classroom, but lacks instrumental resources so teachers are unable to integrate composing, performing and appraising activities as required by the National Curriculum.
171. Extra-curricular activities are good and have a positive impact on pupils' performing skills. Pupils can learn to sing and to play more instruments than at the time of the last inspection including guitar, violin, keyboard, brass, flute, clarinet and bassoon. A very enthusiastic father provides drum lessons. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils receiving lessons since the previous inspection. Pupils can also participate in a range of activities during lunchtime or after school such as guitar group and choir. There are also opportunities for pupils to take part in the many

events that take place during the year, such as workshops and visits to concerts and the very successful annual school productions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

172. The 2000 teacher assessments for pupils aged 14 are broadly in line with those expected for pupils of this age. There are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls at this key stage.
173. At the end of Key Stage 3, achievement in football lessons is good. They have secure close control and turning skills and are developing a good understanding of the importance of possession play through small-sided games. In dance, girls have successfully developed an understanding of tableaux work through set themes.
174. In the course that all pupils take in Key Stage 4, standards are satisfactory and are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Since the last inspection, standards at GCSE physical education have declined. This decline was halted in 2000 even though the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grade passes remained well below the national average. However, in relation to their prior attainment the small group who took the examination achieved satisfactorily, with many achieving their highest GCSE grade in physical education. Because of the small number of girls entered it is not possible to comment on differences in attainment with boys. Though no Year 11 lessons were observed, inspection evidence together with department targets points to an improvement in standards this year. Year 10 pupils are also making good progress. In basketball, for example, pupils are developing their understanding of different types of defensive marking by comparing the effectiveness of zone defence as opposed to one-on-one marking. In their trampoline lessons, pupils are successfully improving their range of moves such as the front drop.
175. In Year 11, boys are developing their knowledge and understanding of principles of team play through, for example, practices to emphasise the importance of collective responsibility in attack and defence. Standards in association football lessons are good. In their trampoline lessons, older girls are developing the skills and techniques required for the front drop. This then enables them to develop the complexity of their sequence work.
176. Across both these key stages, pupils have a secure understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up. In some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, teachers do not always name the muscle groups being stretched. If this were to be included then it would help prepare better those pupils who choose to take the GCSE course in Key Stage 4. Although no pupils identified as having special educational needs were observed having additional help, they are well supported, integrated and make good progress. The challenge offered in lessons also enables the more physically capable pupils to make good progress.
177. The quality of teaching is very good at both key stages. There are no significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and this is having a positive impact on standards of attainment and the quality of pupils' learning in lessons. The high expectations of teachers, the challenge they offer pupils, together with the very positive attitudes and relationships amongst pupils, all help to create a positive learning atmosphere. All pupils are thus enabled to learn well and make good progress. In a Year 11 boys' association football lesson, for example, all were fully involved in aspects of planning, performing and evaluating the effectiveness of their team play in relation to attack and defence. This deepened their knowledge and

understanding of the principles involved and considerably improved the quality of their performance by the end of the lesson. Pupils are further made aware of their capabilities in lessons because teachers circulate well and offer constructive praise and criticism throughout. The effectiveness of this was evident in a Year 9 girls' dance lesson where the pupils were using a Wilfred Owen poem as a stimulus for their tableaux work.

178. Clear introductions to lessons ensure that pupils are made fully aware of what is expected of them. Very effective appropriate demonstrations also ensure pupils know what they have to do to make progress and develop their skills and techniques. In a Year 10 boys' trampoline lesson, the teacher's demonstration and breakdown of the skills required for the front drop was very effective in this respect. Less confident pupils as well as the more physically capable were successfully motivated to improve the levels of their performance. The planning of lessons, which includes a structured variety of activities, is indicative of teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the games and activities being taught as is their effective use of questioning and structured group discussions. This allows the teachers not only to establish what pupils know and understand, but also enhances their speaking and listening skills and ensures they understand the terminology being used.
179. In the few lessons where the quality of teaching was satisfactory, there were inconsistencies that would improve the quality if they were dealt with. For example, the few non-participants would not always be fully involved in the whole group introductions and demonstrations, or in evaluating the performance of others. Sometimes, at the end of lessons, the teacher tends to tell the pupils what they have achieved rather than to involve them by asking for their views. Although theory work is consistently marked for GCSE pupils, the comments made concerning missing work are not always followed up.
180. This is a strong and well-led department. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained for boys and improved for girls and there are now no significant differences between them. The improved quality of teaching together with the improvement in attitudes and behaviour of pupils is having a positive impact on standards in the course that all pupils follow. The present programme for monitoring and evaluating teaching should ensure that the good practice observed during the inspection is shared with all who teach in the department. Strategies for improving standards at GCSE are now starting to take effect.
181. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the new statutory requirements. At Key Stage 3, the issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed. However, at Key Stage 4, in the course that all follow, it is unclear as to which two of the activities are being studied in depth by pupils. A good number of extra-curricular activities continues to extend provision for physical education. As a result of the dedication and enthusiasm of teachers, some of whom are from other departments, individual pupils have gained representative honours at district and county level and the Year 10 girls' athletics team are currently district champions. Well over 50 per cent of pupils continue to be involved in extra-curricular activities throughout the year.
182. Assessment procedures are now well established and the new 'levels' for physical education have been introduced. It is, though, not yet clear whether pupils fully understand what they have to do to attain them. Not all parents or carers are being fully informed as to how their children are achieving in relation to end of key stage expectations. Some aspects of accommodation have not improved and timetable arrangements mean that on occasions changing facilities are very cramped. These

are in need of refurbishment. Shower arrangements do not provide the privacy expected by both boys and girls. This has a negative impact on pupils' standards of hygiene. The lack of a dedicated teaching room for GCSE theory work detracts from the ethos of this provision and makes it difficult to build upon work in practical lessons by, for example, having displays of key words and specific terminology.