

INSPECTION REPORT

BOWLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Grindleton, Clitheroe

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119726

Headteacher: Mr M Graham

Reporting inspector: Mr W K Baxendale
02928

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 6th October 2000

Inspection number: 223712

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Riversmead
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Lancashire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs V Townson

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs J Goodchild 12775	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents Assessment
Mr J Laver 1085	Team inspector	English Physical education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Mr B Meech 13619	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	Curriculum opportunities offered to pupils
Mrs V Blackburn 27050	Team inspector	Science	
Mr A Allfree 8503	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
Mrs T Aspin 4926	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
Mr H Davies 13734	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bowland High School is a much smaller than average non-selective, secondary modern school, educating 354 boys and girls in the 11-16 age range. No pupil has English as an additional language, but four come from an ethnic minority background. When they start the school at the age of 11, the pupils' attainment is about average, though local selection for grammar schools means that very few high-attainers attend. There is an average proportion of pupils (19.3 per cent) who have special educational needs, but a well-above national average (9.1 per cent) have statements of special educational needs. These include pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with learning difficulties in about equal numbers. There is also a small number with physical difficulties. The school serves an area of slightly above average socio-economic circumstances in a deeply rural area. Nearly all the pupils come to school by public or private motorised transport.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school. It succeeds in getting the pupils to do their best and, by the time they leave as 16 year-olds, most attain standards that are higher than would have been expected from their performance when they started the school as 11 year-olds. The above average GCSE results are achieved despite the annual loss of around one-quarter of the pupils from the area - most of them high attainers - to grammar schools. Excellent leadership by a recently appointed headteacher has improved both the support pupils enjoy, by better target-setting and the evaluation of teaching quality. The school serves the local community very well and is held in high regard by the parents: it is a genuine community school. The school's main weakness is its, in parts, depressing and cramped accommodation. This stops pupils reaching even higher standards in subjects such as science, physical education, music, modern foreign languages, design and technology, religious education and art.

What the school does well

- Standards are above the national average for the proportions of pupils obtaining 5 or more higher grades, A*-C, at GCSE and they are well above those of similar schools.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The provision for the pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Leadership is excellent.
- Out-of-school activities and relationships with the local community are very good.
- Very good relationships in the school and the good support pupils receive lead to high standards.

What could be improved

- Accommodation inadequacies, which restrict their learning opportunities in many subjects, prevent the pupils from reaching even higher standards.
- The senior line management structure does not monitor and foster the skills of middle managers systematically enough.
- Annual reports to parents do not give a clear enough picture of what a pupil needs to do to improve.
- The timetable and shortness of the school day are too restrictive on the way things are organised throughout and the curriculum for 14-16 year-olds does not have a wide enough range of learning opportunities.
- Using computers to help learning is unsatisfactory in science, history, modern foreign languages and music teaching and there are a few other weaknesses in teaching methods.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS PREVIOUS INSPECTION

The school has made a very good improvement since the previous inspection in November 1995. Standards have risen substantially: they are above national averages in many subjects. The school's procedures for evaluating its performance and doing something about it have improved greatly, although these have still to result in better English, religious education, geography and history GCSE examination results. The support given to pupils, including setting them demanding targets, is now very good. The staffing now matches the requirements of the curriculum much more closely and the quality of teaching is much improved. Attendance has also improved.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 National Curriculum Tests	B	C	C	A
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The standards of both 14 and 16 year-olds are above national averages in mathematics and science and in line with them in English. Attainment in information technology is well above average and that in modern foreign languages is also above average. Attainment in art has improved and is now in line with national averages, as is design and technology. GCSE standards are below average in history and geography because of some pupils' literacy difficulties. They are not good enough in the short course in religious education, because many pupils do not try hard enough. Standards are rising at a faster rate than is the national trend of improvement. In comparison with pupils in similar schools, the pupils do very well, their attainment is well above average at both 14 and 16 years of age, though the progress they make between 14 and 16 is slower than in other similar schools. The girls' attainment is better than that of the boys, by a wider margin than is the case nationally, but measures put in place to raise boys' attainment are working and the gap is narrowing: the boys are attaining more highly than the girls in the current Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and attain creditable results. Pupils speak and listen well, most read fluently but rather flatly. Most write well, but there are problems with spelling, grammar and punctuation amongst lower-attainers and these undermine their progress and standards. The pupils' use of mathematics is good. The school has appropriate targets for improvement based on a close analysis of the pupils' attainment as 11 year-olds. It is successful in raising attainment to levels that exceed predictions and so more than achieves its annual targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils' attitudes are a great strength of the school, contributing clearly to the standards achieved. The pupils want to do well and applaud success genuinely and generously.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: the school is an orderly community in which the pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. The school has high expectations of good behaviour and nearly all pupils meet these.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils are given and accept a high degree of personal responsibility, taking an active part in running the school's daily routines.
Attendance	Good: this contributes to rising attainment through the good progress it allows the pupils to make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is uniformly good. There are no clear variations between the quality of teaching with the younger 11-14 year-olds and the 14-16 year-olds. The quality of teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection and a high proportion, over ninety per cent, is now at least of a good quality. Ninety-eight per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory. Non-specialist teachers were in charge of the two lessons in which teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good or better in thirty-three per cent of lessons. Good teaching in English, mathematics and science fosters the pupils' literacy development and in English, especially, is successfully geared to raising the boys' attainment. The teachers' management of the pupils is very good and, because the pupils have very good attitudes to school, learning is also good. Weaknesses in aspects of teaching are in the expectations some teachers have of high-attaining pupils, so their needs are not met, a lack of variety in the way history is taught and not enough detail in the correction of work on how a pupil may improve. Some parents do not ensure that their child's homework is completed on time. Learning assistants make a positive contribution to the learning of all pupils with special educational needs, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, so the pupils with learning difficulties and some other lower-attainers make good progress, similar to that of the rest. Good adaptations of resources help pupils with physical difficulties to make good progress. Limitations caused by the poor accommodation do inhibit the pupils' learning opportunities in science, design and technology, physical education, art, modern foreign languages and music.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education, but the curriculum for 14-16 year-olds is limited. The length of the school day and the distribution of periods within it constrain learning too much.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: very good management and all legal requirements are met. Very good links with support agencies. Parents are very pleased both with provision and quality of education the pupils receive. A comparative weakness is in the detail of individual education plans in each subject.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: social development is excellent, moral very good and cultural good. The main weakness is in the preparation for life in a multi-ethnic society and in the provision and monitoring of spiritual development in all subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: the school achieves its objectives of care and challenge. A supportive environment helps the pupils to mature and to attain above-average standards.

The school works very well in partnership with the parents. It is a focal point for much social and cultural activity, providing support in outlying villages as well as in the Grindleton community. Target-setting through the work of a newly arranged pastoral structure is beginning to have an impact on the way the pupils learn. This is complementing the excellent ways the school promotes attendance, good behaviour and works to eliminate oppressive conduct.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: excellent leadership from a recently-appointed headteacher is building on the school's previous successes by establishing a firm structure upon which standards may be raised further by thorough evaluation of teaching and detailed target-setting for staff and pupils. The interpretation of other senior managers' new duties related to this is weaker.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: the governors provide a satisfactory curriculum that meets all statutory requirements; they support the school and champion its cause for improved accommodation vigorously. The curriculum committee has not given enough consideration as to how learning opportunities may be improved.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: close analysis of test and examination results is matched by relevant action. Remedial work is having a clearly beneficial effect in history teaching, for instance. General evaluation and subsequent training has raised the quality of teaching substantially.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: school applies the principles of best value efficiently. It makes well-considered purchases, saves for planned improvements and does very well in difficult circumstances.

Whilst resources and staffing are adequate and show an improvement since the previous inspection, the accommodation remains, despite the construction of a small new teaching block, poor. Much is unsuitable for its purpose: it inhibits both teaching and learning to an unacceptable degree. Uninviting temporary classrooms are exploited very effectively by teachers and pupils, but they cannot overcome deficiencies in rooms that drip with humidity, making it impossible to use a computer and in which textbooks and displays deteriorate very rapidly. Other rooms are just too small: they put undue constraints on what can be taught. Taking this into consideration and the results the pupils achieve, the school does provide very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way the school gets the pupils to try hard and do their best. • They feel very comfortable approaching the school with any suggestions or problems. • The pupils enjoy coming to school. • They feel the school is helping their child to become a mature young person. • Pupils behave well and make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accommodation, as it is so poor. • The range of activities outside lessons because it is too narrow. • The amounts and relevance of the homework set and done. • How the school works closely with them as parents.

Inspectors agree with the parents' views on what the school does well. They find the range of activities outside lessons to be very good for such a small school. Inspectors agree with parents that sometimes homework fails to stretch the pupils, but also remind parents that their partnership with the school asks that homework be completed – it isn't always. If this were done, the partnership with parents, which inspectors find is very good, would be even closer.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Attainment has risen since the previous inspection: since then, the school has twice been named as one of the most improved schools nationally for the increases in pupils obtaining 5 or more higher grades, A*-C, in GCSE examinations. This is due entirely to the performance of the girls, whose attainment has consistently outstripped that of the boys, often by a greater margin than the national difference. Attempts by the school to overcome this discrepancy are starting to bear fruit, as the boys' achievement in the current Year 11 is considerably higher than that of the girls.
2. When the pupils start the school as 11 year-olds, their attainment is about average, although there are year-on-year variations in the relative attainment of boys and girls and in the proportions of pupils attaining the standards expected of 11 year-olds. There is an above-average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. A consistent feature of the pattern of pupils' attainment is the absence of many high attainers. This is due to the local annual selection arrangements that place the highest achieving 25 per cent of pupils in grammar schools. A good, consistent feature of the pupils' performance is that predictions based upon their results in national tests for 11 year-olds and upon other tests that measure a broader range of competencies are outstripped: the pupils do much better as 16 year-olds than these tests predict. GCSE results are now consistently above the national average for higher-grade, A*-C passes, but there are not many A* or A grades, due to the loss of high-attainers to grammar schools. Performance is only around average for the proportions obtaining 5 or more grades in the range A*-G: this is due to a few pupils failing to complete coursework and to a small amount of persistent absenteeism. The school adds substantial value to the pupils' education and standards. It does well because of the hard work, applauded by the parents, it expects and gets the pupils to do; their very good attitudes to school and the improving quality of teaching. These are the main reasons why this is a good and improving school.
3. There are no national figures available for comparison for any examinations taken in the year 2000. The 1999 national tests for 14 year-olds show the pupils do better in science and mathematics than in English, although improvements over the last four years are generally greater in English than in the other two. However, in 1999, point scores in English were below average, whilst they were above average in the other two subjects. Considering the absence of high-attaining pupils, the performance of pupils in mathematics and science is particularly good, since above national average proportions reached Level 6, both in 1999 and over the four-year period up to then. This is higher than expected of 14 year-olds. Over the four years up to 1999, the boys underachieved by a small but significant amount compared with boys nationally. At the same time, the girls achieved significantly better than did girls nationally in the three subjects taken as a whole. The school's average points score in national tests showed a trend of improvement broadly in line with the national trend over this period. Compared with similar schools, the pupils' performance was well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English.
4. Teacher assessments in the other subjects evaluated at age 14 show the pattern reported at the previous inspection continuing. Standards are higher in design and technology and information technology than in geography, history and modern foreign languages. This justifies the school's concern to improve the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and, whilst there are still weaknesses, the improvements in both provision and use of information technology show clearly. Literacy weaknesses are the principal reason for these discrepancies, though the pupils do not underachieve

significantly in any.

5. This is shown in the above-average GCSE results for higher-grade passes and, over the last three years for passes in the full grade range. The contribution of the girls to above average point scores is substantial, particularly when the absence of high attainers is taken into account. They were well above average both in 1999 and over the last three years, whilst those of the boys were below average in the same periods. The girls' average point score in GCSE examinations was 10.4 above the national average in 1999, whilst that of the boys was 4.7 below average! The girls' successes in English, for example, are well up to those to be expected in a grammar school. The school's trend in GCSE results over the period 1994-1999 was above the national trend of improvement. Compared with similar schools, the pupils' results and point scores were well above average. Considering the state of the fabric and the above average incidence of special educational needs, these results show an effective school. The targets for improvement set by the governors exceed those of the local education authority and have been met consistently over the past three years. Although in 2000 there was a fall in the proportions of pupils obtaining 5 or more higher grade GCSEs, the school met its target and the pupils generally attained better grades than assessments foresaw when they started as 11 year-olds.
6. Whilst the 1999 GCSE results in English, mathematics and science are above national averages, those in other subjects fluctuate. Results in information technology and business studies are well above average and those in modern foreign languages are also above average. Results in design and technology are in line with national averages, but this subject has shown less improvement over time than have most others. A big improvement in art results since the previous inspection has seen results rise to the national average. Results in humanities subjects are less good with well below average results in history and geography. This is due, in the main, to literacy problems and the prior attainment of the pupils who chose to follow the courses. Attainment in religious education is well below average and not good enough, especially in the short GCSE course where many pupils do not try hard enough.
7. Standards in lessons reflect to a degree the GCSE results. Pupils produce high quality graphical work as 14-16 year-olds in mathematics, producing also some very good investigational work in the subject. In science, 14 year-old higher-attainers work well in the science of astronomy and the lower-attainers can describe in simple terms scientific processes such as photosynthesis. In English, most boys make sound progress, and most girls make good progress, in developing speaking, listening and reading skills, although progress in improving the technical skills of writing is more uneven.
8. The pupils do particularly well in information technology, due to very good teaching and a keenness to use computers: their experimental work is to a very high standard and by age 16, pupils can work efficiently under realistic business pressure, using their very good computer skills in different situations. In modern foreign languages, the pupils' written work improves in accuracy; they use different tenses with some authority and offer opinions on different topics in French. The standards of boys show the greatest improvement, so that they are now neck and neck with the girls. The pupils do well in aspects of physical education though the range of disciplines is limited by the poor accommodation. Standards in some of those practised are well up to expectation showing, for instance not only basic skill, but also poise and elegance as important additions. In art, the pupils use a variety of forms of expression effectively, though the use of sketchbooks is comparatively underdeveloped: the pupils do not draw enough. In design and technology, the pupils become proficient in working in a number of ways and also develop their critical skills, for example in determining the qualities of different pieces of kitchen equipment. Musical skill development is limited by the low amount of study time, but the pupils improve their singing talents and make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills develop satisfactorily in geography, but weaknesses in English undermine the standards of some. In history, the pupils learn how to order events over time and learn the reasons why historical events change the ways people live. They become aware of similarities and differences between religions through their studies of religious education, but the teaching sometimes does not pursue this to enough depth.

9. Since the previous inspection, good improvement has been made in the standards of attainment of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with all types of special educational needs achieve well. Almost all attain GCSE grades in English and mathematics by the time they leave school. Pupils with recognised physical difficulties attain good standards due to the careful adaptation of resources. Pupils with recognised behavioural difficulties achieve particularly well due to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and participation, and good discipline.
10. From their about average standards as 11 year-olds in English, all pupils improve appropriately by the age of 14. They listen attentively, both to teachers and to each other and learn to speak with increasing confidence. Pupils also develop their reading skills satisfactorily. Many read accurately and fluently, but with little expression, and lower-achievers find it hard to cope with unfamiliar words. Writing improves satisfactorily. It becomes more extensive, but average and lower achievers have weaker technical skills, making frequent errors in punctuation and in everyday spellings. Between the ages of 14 and 16 the higher-achieving boys, and most girls, make good progress in developing key speaking, listening and writing skills, developing critical evaluation and analysis, for example of the impact of the media in advertising.
11. Improvements in literacy are helping to raise achievement in several subjects. A new literacy co-ordinator has compiled a policy and begun to raise staff awareness of how to achieve this: for example by emphasising key words and technical vocabulary in each subject and improving the presentation of worksheets to improve pupils' learning. Whilst it is too early to evaluate the impact of these initiatives thoroughly, they are beginning to take effect. In a few subjects, pupils do occasionally struggle to sustain a debate or to write accurately or at length, for example in geography. However, there are many positive developments: in history, for example, teachers often get pupils to make notes, develop scanning skills and focus on key words, to improve writing at length. In science, pupils improve extensive written evaluations of experiments satisfactorily and in design and technology specific structures help them write evaluations of their projects. Technical terms and expressions are emphasised in mathematics.
12. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic have improved since the previous inspection and are satisfactory and often good. Number skills appear to be stronger in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9 where pupils did not benefit from the National Numeracy Project whilst at primary school. Lessons are often planned to start with a short number test or numeracy activity and these are popular with pupils. Pupils are encouraged to learn their multiplication tables and to use calculators only when really necessary and then to do so with care. There is good support from the mathematics department for the whole-school numeracy policy that is now in place. A numeracy co-ordinator has established links with most subject departments and is beginning to collect information on number work that is particularly appropriate for the various subjects.
13. There is considerable evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other subject areas. In science at Key Stage 3 there is a range of work showing pupils' calculations of balancing forces and moments, and of their use of graphs and charts. In Key Stage 4 science there is evidence of pupils plotting graphs of experimental data

effectively. There is good promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology. Pupils weigh and measure accurately and estimate costs. They analyse the energy value of food and calculate the energy content of snack food. There is good accurate work in drawing and cutting. Work in history at Key Stage 3 shows pupils able to interpret graphs and tables competently. In Key Stage 4, pupils interpret statistical data well, using diagrams, bar and pie charts to illustrate their findings, for example in history, geography, science and design and technology. Pupils sample data graphically in religious education and use numeric notations for patterns of time in music. In other subjects there is only limited evidence of pupils displaying their numeracy skills, but no evidence of progress in these subjects being inhibited because of this.

14. A major weakness is the effects of the dampness in some rooms, for example in modern foreign languages, and the ways this inhibits the use of computers to help pupils to learn. There is, nonetheless, good use of information technology in a number of subjects. In design and technology, for example, pupils use the Internet to research topics such as energy, and project work makes full use of pupils' skills to present charts, graphs and diagrams. Investigative work in science makes similar use of these skills and of pupils' abilities to work with spreadsheets to deal with experimental data. In mathematics good use is made of specialist subject software and pupils also use spreadsheets to record data from their investigative work. Computer-aided design and manufacture are, however, under-developed in the curriculum and the use of computers to manipulate census data, for example, is weak in history.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are both very good. They are highly motivated to learn. Their personal development and their relationships are also very good. Parents rightly consider that the school is successful in achieving high standards of both work and behaviour. Attendance is good.
16. Pupils enjoy school and their lessons. They are open, friendly and happy children who communicate freely and easily with adults. Their first-rate enthusiasm for school means they have very good attitudes to learning. This is a strength and is one of the reasons why so many make good progress in their learning and attain a higher standard in both national tests for 14 year-olds and GCSE examinations than predicted by the school's assessment procedures when they start as 11 year-olds. The pupils' very high motivation towards learning is stimulated by the consistently good standard of teaching and effective support from learning assistants. Most pupils are able to sustain good levels of concentration throughout lessons, respond to the challenges teachers set and settle quickly to written tasks. They work well together in pairs and small groups where they encourage and support each other when encountering difficulties with their work. Although pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, opportunities for small group work are limited because of the cramped conditions in most classrooms: independent study and research facilities are limited. Pupils are confident in talking about their work, are keen to join in debates and make perceptive comments when called upon to do so. The very isolated instances where pupils were not concentrating was due to a failure to match the difficulty of what was being taught to the attainment level of the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs take a full and active role in lessons, regardless of their specific learning difficulties. They willingly answer and ask questions and have confidence in their teachers. They work hard to produce a good quality of work. They are fully integrated into the school community.
17. The standard of behaviour was judged to be good at the previous inspection. It is now very good: the school is an orderly community where pupils are courteous and welcoming towards visitors. The school has clear expectations of good behaviour and very nearly all the pupils conform to this. This has a positive effect on pupils' overall

attainment and progress because it produces an environment conducive to study. The school has a small group of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour but teachers' very good class management skills and interesting lessons ensure that they are sufficiently engaged in their work and the learning of others is not affected. All members of staff consistently follow the school's procedures for behaviour management. Bullying is not an issue and any incidents are effectively dealt with when brought to the attention of staff. The number of pupils excluded for a fixed term has risen since the previous inspection. This sanction is only used when all other strategies have failed. Good use is made of internal isolation as an alternative to exclusion. Procedures appropriately involve the governing body and parents at all stages. No pupil has been excluded on more than one occasion during the last academic year. There were no permanent exclusions.

18. The personal development of pupils is very good. They are encouraged to accept a high degree of personal responsibility and initiative. They are empowered to take an active role in the running of the school's daily routines. Prefects provide excellent role models for younger pupils, supervising lunchtime, for example, and also acting as 'friends' to Year 7 pupils when they enter the school. Prefects are elected by a ballot of all pupils, as are the representatives on the school council and officers of the school's societies. The school council is an effective forum for pupils to express their views and matters brought are taken seriously by the staff and governing body. For example, the current debate about pupils being able to bring mobile phones into school involves them in agreeing terms of usage and a presentation to staff and the governing body. Pupils in Year 10, as part of their service to the community, organise fund-raising events to pay for the annual senior citizens' Christmas party and gifts. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme also involves pupils in service to the school community by supporting homework clubs in local villages organised by the District Youth Team. These activities effectively develop an awareness of the responsibilities of citizenship amongst pupils and foster their understanding of feelings, values and, to an extent, beliefs different from their own.
19. Attendance is good: it improved since the previous inspection and has risen to 93 per cent for the academic year 1999/2000. Unauthorised absence was 0.33 per cent. These figures are an improvement on the 1998/1999 figures when the school was judged to be broadly in line with the national average for schools. The computerised attendance recording system is efficiently used to provide up-to-date data for staff and external agencies. The effective partnership with the education welfare service and other external agencies, together with vigilant monitoring by school staff, has enabled this improvement to come about. This high level of attendance is a contributory factor to the good progress and the pupils' above-average attainment.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is good. Its improvement since the previous inspection is substantial. This is due to big improvements in the match of teachers' qualifications with the subjects they teach and better help for those who still teach subjects other than their own. There is now an effective programme of evaluation of teaching by the senior management and effective training in good classroom practice, with closer analysis of the pupils' needs. The pupils' very good attitude to school helps to make learning match the quality of teaching: it too is good.
21. Whereas about one-quarter of lessons were unsatisfactorily taught during the previous inspection, this time only two lessons from the 120 observed fell into that category. Both of these were in religious education and were taught by non-specialists who failed to interpret imaginatively the good materials prepared on their behalf by the subject teachers. In other subjects, non-specialists handle materials prepared for them effectively and their teaching is satisfactory at least. Teaching was at least good in

ninety-two per cent of the lessons: a high proportion. It was very good, and occasionally excellent, in thirty-three per cent of the total. There is no discernible overall difference in teaching quality between classes with 11-14 year-olds and with 14-16 year-olds, nor is there a subject in which teaching is clearly stronger or weaker than any other. Half of the lessons in religious education, for example, were taught very well: a high proportion, which was only exceeded by science, music and information technology. All teaching was at least good and often better in design and technology, geography, information technology, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Art was characterised by uniformly good teaching.

22. Corresponding with the parents' perceptions, big improvements since the previous inspection occur in the ways the pupils are made aware of what it is intended to cover in the lesson and in the now satisfactory assessment of progress both during and at the end. This good practice is, however, not uniform. The school's training sessions on this have been effective, but there is still room for improvement. Because the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject and of the pupils are good, the lessons go along at a good pace. The contribution of the learning assistants is key to this, as they keep pupils with special educational needs interested and working hard with the rest; sometimes assistants also lend a hand to other pupils who may need some extra help. The teaching of basic skills is, as a result, also good: this shows clearly in the results obtained. The expectations of what pupils are capable of are generally good, but there are instances when more could be achieved. This stretches to homework, which is sometimes not hard enough for individuals and is completed before the pupils reach home, to the consternation of some parents. Homework is, however, effective in extending learning, though there are also occasions when it is not completed satisfactorily by the pupils. The way teachers modify the work to tease up the interest of pupils who tend to underachieve, boys particularly, is effective in raising standards, as the boys now often surpass the girls in achievement in class, especially as 16 year-olds.
23. Learning is good because the teachers make lessons interesting and their management of the pupils in class is very good. Lessons are divided into appropriately small sections of inter-related activities that keep up momentum and attention. In modern foreign languages, for example, learning takes place in a cheerful atmosphere, despite poor learning conditions, because the teaching has sequences of short activities that place high demands on the pupils to speak and make presentations using authentic language. This, as in all other subjects, means the pupils improve their own knowledge at a good rate: their pace of learning is similarly good in most cases. Teaching methods are good, overall. An excellently taught short Year 7 lesson of dance typified the good use of time and resources and high demands teachers place on pupils in the best teaching. In the half-hour available, the pupils changed, rehearsed what had been done before, heard what they were to do, warmed up effectively, practised and criticised their performances and were ready for their next lesson, having learned a lot: they felt good about it.
24. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Although individual education plans do not play a significant part in planning and provision, teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to match work closely to the pupils' needs. Small class sizes, together with effective, extra support in many classes ensure all pupils are fully involved. These features were particularly evident in a Year 7 English lesson in which pupils were developing their library skills. Special needs learning assistants were used efficiently throughout, including the time the teacher was explaining the carefully-structured activities that met the needs of all pupils. In some lessons, specially purchased or borrowed visually-stimulating resources and a good variety of activities help those with otherwise low attainment to make good progress in their learning. High expectations of behaviour of all pupils in and around the school and good classroom management prevent those with recognised

behavioural difficulties from disrupting the learning of others, because, in the main, they work equally hard and do not waste time. Due to the thoughtful adaptation of equipment to accommodate their needs, pupils with physical difficulties make the same progress in learning as others in their classes in virtually all subjects.

25. Aspects of teaching that are weak include work that occasionally makes insufficient demands on pupils in English, mathematics and history, for instance not taking into account work covered in primary schools. In history, work sometimes lacks variety and the pupils are not given enough tasks that bring the subject really to life, for example by using video extracts. In science the correction of work sometimes lacks detail on how to improve and in mathematics there is a tendency to pay too much attention to individuals at the expense of challenge to the whole class. The weaknesses found in religious education are in the interpretation of materials and in class management in such circumstances. Expectations of the higher-attainers are also not always high enough in this subject.
26. Limitations on what teachers are able to do because of deficiencies in the accommodation are an unfortunate feature of teaching in science, design and technology, modern foreign languages, art, music and physical education. It is the teachers' often great ingenuity that overcomes these drawbacks and maintains the pupils' standards at above average levels.

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

27. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall. There are particular strengths in the way the school fosters the pupils' achievement in mathematics, science and English. Almost throughout, each is taught in classes formed on the basis of their attainment in the subject. The time allocated to English is, however, uncommonly short in Years 10 and 11. The above-average standards the pupils achieve in mathematics and science reflect the school's emphasis on these subjects. There is very good provision for the development of personal and social education. The length of the teaching week is well below that recommended for secondary schools, being based on eight periods of thirty-five minutes per day. There is limited flexibility in the timetable, since most of these are used as double periods. Current organisation does place quite severe limits on what can be taught. This is a weakness of which the school is aware.
28. The curriculum for 11-14 year-olds is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced except for the relatively low time allowance for music in Year 9, an unresolved problem identified at the previous inspection. Otherwise, all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education and personal, social and health education receive a sufficient allocation of time. In physical education, timetable constraints mean that some teaching takes place in a lesson of thirty-five minutes: whilst there are outstanding exceptions, this generally places an undue restriction on the range of activities that are possible. The locally agreed syllabus is implemented in religious education.
29. The curriculum for 14-16 year-olds satisfies statutory requirements, but there are strengths and weaknesses. Overall, although option choices are limited, pupils enjoy a sufficiently broad curriculum. There is good provision for the core subjects of mathematics and science but the time allocation for English language and literature is lower than average. Provision for design and technology, information technology, and for personal, social and health education is also good. In music and physical education there is no GCSE provision due largely to accommodation problems. The quality of provision for physical education is reduced by lack of continuity over a three-week timetable where pupils have four periods one week to allow off-site activity, two periods the second week in school and none the third week. The introduction of a course in the

expressive arts is proving very popular and helping to spread the school's reputation in the area through the performances the pupils put on in the local community as well as in some very good assemblies. The provision for vocational courses is weaker, although the school has effective links with a college of further education so a few pupils study relevant pre-vocational courses there during Years 10 and 11. Preparations for extensions to work-related learning are, however, in hand.

30. Throughout the school, there are opportunities for pupils to practise their information technology skills in other subjects, although better systems for assessing and recording these are needed. The school has satisfactory suitable practices to promote the essential skills of literacy and numeracy across the subjects of the curriculum. The school's literacy policy emphasises the teaching of key words and concepts and the provision of guidance on how to organise and develop extended writing. Effective strategies to reduce boys' underachievement are found in English, especially and these are being spread to other subjects. The school is also auditing the numeracy skills required in different subjects and is beginning to coordinate support for its agreed numeracy policy.
31. Opportunities to extend and enrich learning beyond the timetabled lessons are very good. The pupils' attendance at these activities is outstanding, especially when their dependence on service buses is taken into account. For team sports and for the choir, which meets at lunchtime and after school, parents provide transport. There are numerous theatre and other visits; the modern languages department arranges trips abroad. At lunchtime, there is a wide variety of clubs for homework, dance, games, reading and an environmental group 'The Green Gorillas' helps to maintain the school grounds. There is a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and seven out of eight pupils are involved in some sporting activity. The parents' opinion that there is some lack of activity outside lessons is not borne out by the facts, especially considering the size of the school.
32. The planned programme for careers education and guidance is very good. The school received the quality standard award for careers education and guidance in 1998. There is a close working relationship with the East Lancashire careers service that sees all pupils from Year 9 onwards. Pupils with special educational needs are seen individually in Year 9 and all pupils in Year 11 are interviewed at least once. In Year 10 pupils take part in a ten-week community placement as part of their personal and social education programme and have the opportunity to take part in work placement experience.
33. The school adheres to the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. Every effort is made to include these pupils in all activities and suitable adaptations mean that pupils with physical disabilities are able to reach most areas of the difficult site. Individual education plans are well prepared and take into account previous performance. The links between the special educational needs department and others are, as at the previous inspection, not close enough and, as a result, many targets are too general. However, in each subject, teachers know the pupils well and set suitable work: this is not reflected in the plans. Pupils with special educational needs have particularly effective extra support from learning assistants in English, mathematics and science, where they can work in small groups. The lunchtime homework and subject clubs also provide support and enhance their social skills.
34. There are very good links with partner institutions in both primary and further education. The links with primary schools enable the school to provide very good induction and transfer procedures. There is good support from all subject departments for primary pupils visiting the school. Some of the school's pupils also help when primary pupils visit to work with information technology. There are good links with further education for careers advice and the school has found 'buying in' appropriate course provision for specific pupils in Key Stage 4 very effective.

35. The school's links with the local community are excellent. It has very good links with local industry and commerce through the Education Business Partnership and organises Training 2000 on Saturday mornings, which provides a 20-week programme at the local avionics factory. The school is deeply involved with the local community and manages youth and community services in all the rural areas. It has hired two village halls and installed laptop computers linked to the Internet. Four ex-pupils on the Duke of Edinburgh 'Gold Service Award' scheme help pupils to use these facilities for homework, coursework and access to the Internet. Pupils in Year 10 work for half a day every three weeks to support a community conservation project to improve access, especially for those in wheelchairs, and enhance the facilities with extra benches and seats. The conservation trust supports the project by providing expertise and equipment. The school has found that pupils' attitudes to work have benefited from working alongside adults and it is planning to take on another conservation area.
36. Overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's aims provide a very sound foundation for this aspect of personal development. Since the previous inspection the school has written a clear policy and subjects now identify opportunities to raise pupils' awareness and understanding in their schemes of work.
37. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory and while some departments are still unsure of the importance of their subject in fostering spiritual awareness, there is improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection. Religious education makes a valuable contribution by enabling lower school pupils to examine and acquire insights into beliefs and values held by Christianity and the other major world faiths. Assemblies and acts of worship, which meet statutory requirements, also help establish the caring and purposeful ethos of the school as well as giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on human problems and achievements. The very good ways the pupils join in and lead assemblies exemplifies the qualities of the school. In history, opportunities exist to study conflicts between the church and the state and to reflect on how religious beliefs have influenced the development of democracy. The awesome power of nature and the beauty and wonder associated with the natural world is covered well in geography.
38. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good: the school actively promotes a framework of moral values. Members of staff, by their own example and expectations, act as very good role models. The school aims to develop values such as honesty, fairness and tolerance and pupils are clearly made aware of the differences between right and wrong. The very good personal education programme and assemblies cover a range of moral issues such as responsibilities, prejudice, the dangers of stereotyping, the nature and dangers of drug abuse, bullying, violence and issues associated with the environment. Pupils have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on a number of moral concerns in geography, history and mathematics. Appropriate emphasis is placed on sportsmanship and adherence to rules in physical education. In classrooms pupils benefit from working in an orderly atmosphere with effective rewards and sanctions in place.
39. The opportunities provided to develop pupils' social awareness and inter-personal skills are excellent. Staff support, encourage and value pupils' achievements. The quality of life and daily activity provides a caring and secure environment in which relationships are based on respect and co-operation. Pupils benefit from working collaboratively in lessons, but limitations created by the poor accommodation reduce the impact. Assemblies and the personal education programme also enable pupils to reflect and consider issues associated with relationships, the family and the media. There is a very good range of opportunities for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility. Prefects are given substantial responsibilities and they work closely with younger

pupils. The school council, which has been recently established, has empowered pupils to be involved in running their school. As at the time of the previous inspection, there is very active participation in the community and pupils continue to work with the elderly, the handicapped and the very young. The Green Guerrillas group takes a very active part in the school and local environment. A very good range of extra-curricular activities and visits help to cultivate social interaction. Visits include trips to France and Germany and a good number within this country. Charitable fund-raising raises awareness of the needs of less fortunate members of society.

40. Provision to help pupils to develop an understanding of their own and other cultures is satisfactory. There are a large number of visits to places of cultural interest and pupils are involved in musical and drama activities. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural education through the study of works of different artists across time and in music pupils are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions as well as the diversity and richness of world music. There are visits to museums, art galleries and theatres. The study of different countries and the way of life of their peoples also contribute to raising cultural knowledge and awareness in geography. In religious education, pupils study the characteristics and importance of worship and sacred writings to different cultures. While the raising of awareness of life in a multicultural British and world society is covered, in assemblies and in religious education, the need to raise this aspect is not yet fully appreciated by all departments and is not operated across the whole curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and child protection are good. The school's pastoral philosophy that has recently been introduced under the new staffing structure is 'Care with challenge'. A caring, supportive environment where there are very good relationships between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves ensures that pupils in Year 7 settle quickly into school. Prefects act effectively as mentors to these young pupils: this helps to create self-confidence and a sense of belonging in the larger school community. A strength of the pastoral system is the detailed knowledge that staff have about their pupils. Form tutors are responsible for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development and academic progress. This represents good progress since the previous inspection. Newly-appointed pastoral managers oversee their work but it is not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of their role because the structure was only implemented this term. Pupils are well prepared for post-16 decisions through a very effective careers education programme that includes visits to colleges of further education and places of work. The Saturday workshops also help the pupils to appreciate and to prepare for the world of work. The quality standard award for careers education and guidance shows clearly the good provision for guidance.
42. The school is developing systematic procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The school is in its second year of collecting and collating information about pupils' attainment provided by subject departments. The assessment manager and pastoral managers process this information, which is used to negotiate individual targets for each pupil, and teachers act as mentors to help the pupils achieve the targets set. These are giving extra impetus to the attitudes, achievement and progress in learning of individual pupils in the scheme. As yet, not all pupils benefit from having a mentor but it is intended to extend the scheme to all. Assessment data is used effectively to place pupils in attainment groups, but the process of tracking pupils' performance year-on-year is too recent to make a detailed evaluation. It is used well in some subjects, but is currently not a sufficiently established practice to ensure a consistent approach across the school.
43. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent with a series of effective strategies in place to identify any pupil whose attendance level is a cause for

concern. The education welfare officer works in partnership with the school to monitor attendance levels and provides effective support. Excellent use is made of the computerised attendance recording system to identify patterns of non-attendance which enables pastoral staff to take immediate action. The local residents report any pupils who are not in school and this has also proved to be an effective deterrent to would-be truants. Pupils, returning to school after an absence, receive effective support by subject staff to catch up on missed work and, if appropriate, work is sent home during the absence.

44. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. There are high expectations of good behaviour based on self-discipline and respect for others that are clearly understood by even the youngest pupils. There is a range of sanctions that includes effective internal isolation. Oppressive behaviour is addressed through the personal and social education programme, which ensures that pupils know what action to take if incidents occur. Moral issues are also discussed widely in the very good personal and social education programme. Recently, pupils in Year 8 were helped to understand the consequences of shoplifting through a talk given by the local police liaison officer.
45. The arrangements for child protection are good. The child protection officer is experienced in the procedures involved and is conversant with recent changes to them. There are appropriate links with relevant external support agencies. Members of staff are clear about what to do if a child protection issue arises.
46. Health and safety procedures are good. There are regular health and safety checks that involve a committee of the governing body. The governing body takes its responsibilities seriously. All members of staff have to be extremely vigilant in the area of health and safety due to the cramped, often poor working conditions for themselves and the pupils alike. Frequent temporary repairs and maintenance are effective in reducing health and safety hazards. Concerns identified at the previous inspection have been effectively dealt with.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The parents like the school and are very supportive of it. As a result, the effectiveness of the school's links with them and the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school are very good. Most parents at the pre-inspection meeting and those who completed the questionnaire feel that the school enables pupils to make progress and expects them to work hard. Parents also feel that the teaching within the school is good. They also feel they are able to approach the school if problems occur and that the personal development opportunities for pupils are good.
48. The school strives successfully to involve parents in all aspects of their child's education and to work in partnership to ensure that all children achieve their best. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and home is generally good. Some concerns were expressed in the parents' questionnaire about the amount of homework pupils were given and the inspection findings supported their view, particularly for 11-14 year-olds. However, during the inspection it was also noted that all pupils did not always complete homework. For example, the low results in geography at GCSE last year were attributed to coursework not being completed, despite the vigorous efforts of the teaching staff.
49. Parents' views are sought, in the form of questionnaires, on a range of topics, as are those of parent governors and the parents', teachers' and friends' association. The school measures the attendance of parents at parents' evenings and other school functions. The information gained is used to inform future decisions such as uniform changes, new codes of behaviour and changes to format of parents' evenings.

50. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about progress, is satisfactory. There are regular newsletters and the homework diary is a generally effective means of daily communication between home and school. However, apart from mathematics and art, the annual reports to parents do not contain enough information for parents to assess what their children can do and what they need to do to raise their level of attainment: target-setting for improvement is weak in reports. This academic year the school is producing termly progress reviews based on current assessment data but this provision cannot yet be evaluated.
51. The parents of children with special educational needs are appropriately involved with their annual reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The leadership provided by a new headteacher, appointed two terms before the inspection, is excellent. He provides a very clear educational direction for the school. Building upon the many inherited strong points, he has placed the management structure on a much firmer basis by, for instance, setting up a strong pastoral support system for all pupils and improving target-setting. Communications within the school are now clearer and middle managers are starting to shoulder responsibility more readily, although there is some way to go in this. The headteacher has also implemented a rigorous, effective programme of evaluating teaching.
53. The school's aims are clearly met, not only through the standards the pupils achieve, but also by the very good relationships and interaction the school has with the parents and local communities. Evidence of this comes primarily from the parents' strong commendations of a school that is easy to approach and their endorsement of the fact that the pupils are expected to work hard and that they do so.
54. Positive results of the very good evaluation of teaching are evident through the substantial improvements in its quality since the previous inspection. Curative measures have clearly improved the quality of teaching in history, for example. Similarly, the governors' appointment of an accomplished advanced skills teacher and a much-improved match of teachers' qualifications to the subjects they teach are helping to raise standards. Management has made sure that those teaching outside their subjects get better support from specialist colleagues: as a result, unsatisfactory teaching has virtually disappeared.
55. The advanced skills teacher is starting to play an important part in the school's plans for performance management. The current effective evaluation of teaching, carried out by the headteacher and senior staff and accepted by a well-established teaching staff, is suitably geared to the development of a full programme. Both practice and the arrangements in place make this a good school for carrying out initial teacher training.
56. The school development plan shows considerable improvement over the one in operation at the time of the previous inspection. The areas of concern are appropriate to the school's needs for further improvement, linking, for instance, teaching quality to higher standards and emphasising evaluation, a weakness at that time. Target-setting is prominent and the need to improve pupils' continuity of education from school to school, better links with the community, improved attendance, information technology and health and safety are some of the features that show a school unwilling to rest on its laurels. Responsibility for seeing projects through is clear and review of progress towards success is ongoing. The main weaknesses in development planning are in the way subjects compile their own plans, as they do not always reflect whole-school priorities and the interpretation of the line management role of the deputy headteachers, whose responsibility this is. Senior personnel do not manage effectively good, re-

arranged management structures, intended to eliminate the isolation of teachers working in single-person departments, closely enough. As a result, weaknesses in the leadership and management of some departments persist, for example in the evaluation of teaching in geography, history and religious education; the effective use of computers in history and a shared commitment to improvement in that subject. However, there is a renewed vigour amongst members of the middle management, due to the strategic appointments and revised procedures implemented by the new headteacher to establish greater cohesion. They have, for instance, embraced the new literacy co-ordinator's early steps in improving standards with support for the launch of an appropriate policy.

57. The management of special educational needs is very good. All legal requirements are met and records are carefully maintained. Links with support agencies are very good. The recently-appointed co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of provision and is steadily addressing the weaker areas indicated in the previous inspection report, such as the collaboration with departments to create targets for individual education plans that are specific to each subject. There is an appropriate number of suitably qualified learning support assistants who are used effectively to lend help to others in most classes. Their effect on pupils' achievement is very good. Suitable training is planned to help these assistants cope with situations that can arise when dealing with pupils with specific problems. The budget is used effectively to provide small classes and this is enabling pupils with behavioural or learning difficulties to make good progress. Resources are suitably modified to give pupils with physical difficulties full access to practical work, and to allow them to achieve similar standards to others in the class. The governors give high priority to special educational needs and are kept well informed.
58. The governors have a committee structure that lets them keep abreast of all developments. They carry out their legal duties fully and are keen to hold the school rigorously to account, although their main endeavours are rightly oriented towards overcoming inertia in the provision of the improved accommodation the pupils deserve. Budgetary control is very good and specific grants are used very effectively for their intended purposes. Steps to ensure best value for money are meticulous. The current substantial surplus is carefully earmarked mainly for improvements to existing provision to match anticipated extensions to the site. The school development plan provides a sound basis for decisions on expenditure; this gives the governors a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have, for example, also been active in supporting the school in improving aspects of provision in history and English that inspection evidence shows to have been effective. A comparative weakness is the operation of the curriculum committee that has not yet carried out an enquiry into how both the timetable and school week might be altered to improve the range of courses and opportunities given to pupils.
59. The governors have set demanding targets that have been met. These exceed the targets set by the local education authority and require the school to continue to raise the pupils' attainment well beyond that predicted by analysis of test results when they start as 11 year-olds.
60. The library provides an excellent area in which to learn. It is well stocked and has direct access to the Internet and other information technology sources, but it is frequently used as a classroom. Although much of this usage is by pupils with special educational needs, who do benefit greatly from the resources at their disposal, its service to most other pupils is limited to lunch and break times, as they cannot get in during lessons. Whilst staffing and resources are, in the main, adequate, the influence of unsuitable, poor accommodation on standards is substantial. A small new wing, built since the previous inspection, presents a stark contrast with much of the rest of the school. These older parts are too often cramped and damp, despite the best efforts of the site

management. The accommodation inhibits the further development of science, art, design and technology, physical education, music and modern foreign languages either because there is not enough space or the conditions are so bad that computers, for example, cannot be used and even textbooks deteriorate rapidly in the wet.

61. Management structures and practices promise continuing improvements and the school's shared commitment to succeed is very good, but it is tempered by the shortcomings of the buildings. As a result, its capacity to do so is no more than satisfactory. Considering the standards attained and the good quality of the pupils' education in unprepossessing conditions, the school gives very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors and staff should address the following weaknesses in their post-inspection action plan for further improvements:

- (1) Use the evidence of this report to add to their case for the construction of more suitable learning accommodation to help improve the pupils' opportunities to learn and their standards especially in science, physical education, modern foreign languages, art, design and technology and music.
See paragraphs: 8, 14, 23, 26, 58, 60, 81, 86, 93, 95, 103, 131, 138, 148.

In their action plan the governors and staff should also address the following comparative weaknesses:

- (2) Strengthen the deputy headteachers' oversight of the departments for which they have line responsibility. In so doing they will, for example, identify the management training needs of their colleagues; collaborate with them to make sure that the subject development plans identify more closely with the school plan so that everyone can be seen to be pulling together; attend meetings regularly and minute them for general discussion.
See paragraph 56.
- (3) Improve the detail of reports to parents so they may also see the areas where their child may make tangible improvements in his/her standards in each subject and overall. Also make the statements of pupils with special educational needs more precise as to how improvement may be made in each subject.
See paragraphs 33, 50, 132.
- (4) Improve the organisation of the school day and the length of time the pupils spend in lessons so that the curriculum may be expanded and the balance of time between subjects be more equal. This will also permit the school to undertake its responsibilities for improvement of the curriculum in the ways it teaches basic skills and other key general aspects of education such as civics.
See paragraphs 27, 28, 29, 58, 149.
- (5) Improve the way teachers use computer programs to help learning in science, modern foreign languages, music and history. Also, eradicate the residual weaknesses in teaching, so that consistently high demands are made on all pupils, especially the higher-attainers in English, mathematics and history; precision is improved in the correction of work in science and there is better interpretation of lesson plans and class management in religious education.
See paragraphs 25, 69, 78, 87, 112, 115, 131, 133, 152.
- (6) Improve the provision for preparing the pupils to live in a multicultural society.
See paragraphs 40 and 94.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	120
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	29	59	6	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	354
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	26

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	67

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.0
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	45	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	27	30	28
	Girls	26	26	23
	Total	53	56	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (61)	73 (65)	66 (63)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (27)	43 (38)	27 (22)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	29	29	28
	Girls	27	25	23
	Total	56	54	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (69)	70 (72)	66 (65)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (36)	44 (39)	30 (27)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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
	1999	35	29	64

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	10	30	35
	Girls	24	28	28
	Total	34	58	63
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (58.3)	91 (100)	98 (100)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (n/a)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40 (40.5)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	350
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	14	6
Other minority ethnic groups	2	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)	27.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	243

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/a
Key Stage 3	19.8
Key Stage 4	17.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	933,982
Total expenditure	937,435
Expenditure per pupil	2,648
Balance brought forward from previous year	80,909
Balance carried forward to next year	98,071

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	354
Number of questionnaires returned	127

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	47	4	4	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	48	5	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	60	6	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	54	12	4	6
The teaching is good.	34	54	2	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	45	9	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	37	2	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	35	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	35	45	11	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	37	47	2	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	46	4	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	50	11	6	7

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Around 10 per cent made extra comments. There were more positive than negative ones. The positive comments included the quality of the staff working in very difficult conditions; they are approachable, give extra lessons, for instance in reading, and are particularly helpful in the area of special educational needs. Pupils are happy in the school. The pastoral system is said to be very effective by some respondents. The school gets strong approval of the way it handles the small amount of bullying which occurs, for the most part, on the buses. The quality of teaching is said to be very good in many cases.

A few parents, on the other hand, are less enthusiastic about aspects of teaching, for example of reading, spelling and, as they saw it, the sporadic correction of work. Homework of a variable quality lacked consistency, challenge and impact upon learning. The buildings are roundly condemned and parents think it well nigh miraculous that results are so good,

considering the conditions. Individuals mentioned the absence of lockers, poor choice for 14-16 year-olds, under-stretched pupils and over-long assemblies.

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

ENGLISH

62. The English department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Lower-achieving pupils are now making good progress in developing basic skills. All teachers are suitably trained in the subject. The quality of teaching and of marking is now good. The quality of relationships, leadership and management are still good, and assessment has a higher profile. The pupils' achievement is good overall.
63. The percentage of pupils at the age of 14 achieving Level 5 (that expected) or higher in the 1999 national tests was close to the national average, although girls achieved at a higher rate than boys. These results were better than the average for similar schools nationally. The over-generous teachers' assessments of pupils suggested higher levels than those indicated by the national tests. In the period 1996-9, test results in English were below the national average for boys, but close to the national average for girls. The test results for 2000 continued this pattern of girls achieving at a considerably higher level than did the boys.
64. The evidence of the inspection confirmed these patterns and results. By the age of 14, pupils' standards in speaking and listening are good. Standards in reading are close to the national average, although a few are below this standard. Standards in writing are also close to the national average although those of some pupils are weakened by their poor technical skills of writing, particularly spelling: they underachieve.
65. The proportion of 16 year-olds achieving higher, A*-C, grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations was overall slightly above the national average in English language, and in line with the national average for English literature, although English literature results were lower than the results of most other subjects in the school. However, when taking gender differences into account, the results of girls were well above the national average for both language and literature, whilst those of boys were well below. Overall standards for language and literature at grades A*-C were well above those of similar schools nationally, whilst the 100 per cent achievement at grades A*-G was above both the national average and the average for similar schools nationally. The results for 2000 continued this pattern, but with the gender difference less marked in English literature. The evidence of the inspection confirmed that standards in English overall are in line with the national average for 16 year-olds, although there is a substantial minority with writing skills below this level.
66. Pupils aged 11-14 speak well, volunteering to contribute in class, and readily taking part in debate, as seen for example in a Year 9 lesson when pupils discussed extracts from a range of science fiction novels. Pupils also develop their reading skills satisfactorily, but make slower progress in this aspect of English than others. Many read with appropriate accuracy and fluency, although frequently with little expression, and lower-achievers are often unable to correct themselves or cope with unfamiliar words. Writing improves significantly. Pupils learn to write more extensively and in a range of styles, although average and lower achievers make slower progress in developing the technical skills of writing, making many errors in punctuation, for example when recording direct speech, and in everyday spellings. Pupils write good factual accounts, such as descriptions of the school. They write interesting reviews of books such as 'Buddy' and 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. They research effectively the lives of contemporary authors and classical authors like Dickens, and then write good analyses of their works. These reviews and analyses become progressively more

detailed and mature, as seen for example in the work of higher-achieving pupils analysing 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Silas Marner'. The textual analysis of Shakespeare and Chaucer shows enjoyment and sometimes sophistication. Pupils also write creative and imaginative stories of increasing length and depth. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14, benefiting from specialist teaching and relatively small teaching groups. Higher-achieving pupils make the most progress in their learning because they have better writing skills and a wider vocabulary, which they put to good use.

67. Between the ages of 14 and 16 the higher-achieving boys, and most girls, make good progress in developing key speaking, listening and writing skills, and in particular they develop their ability to critically evaluate a variety of texts, complete coursework, and analyse the impact of the media, particularly in advertising. Pupils learn to make analytical comparisons of diverse texts such as Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men' and Mrs Gaskell's 'The Sexton's Heroes'. They make sound progress in learning to look at a text, such as the play 'An Inspector Calls', from several perspectives; whilst the textual analysis of a play like 'Macbeth' shows increasing depth and evidence of enjoyment for many pupils. Average and lower-achieving boys make less progress in improving their basic, technical skills, although the evidence of the inspection is that the gap in achievement between boys and girls in English has begun to narrow significantly. Pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 with special educational needs make good progress in extending their basic writing skills.
68. The quality of teaching in English is good overall. Good teaching is characterised by several features that result in good learning at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Teachers use a range of resources imaginatively, so motivating pupils to learn. For example, they use science fiction literature in Year 9 to interest boys; and a variety of newspapers with a lower-achieving Year 11 group investigating the way in which the media represented the recent petrol strike. Teachers use questioning effectively to reinforce understanding. Briskly-paced teaching requires specific time targets combined with a variety of activities, which keep pupils well focused on their tasks. This is a feature particularly of short lessons, and was seen for example in a Year 10 class in which pupils studied Willy Russell's 'Our Day Out'. Teachers frequently take the opportunity to extend and reinforce vocabulary, for example by encouraging pupils to use dictionaries and thesauruses. Pupils are also encouraged to draft work and take care with presentation, which accordingly is usually of a high standard. Teachers give due prominence to homework when it is used to extend work done in lessons. Relationships between pupils are good - they work well both collaboratively and individually - and between pupils and teachers, in all classes. As a result, pupils want to do well for their teachers. In the best lessons, the quality of the relationships, combined with skilful explanations and questioning by the teacher, result in a purposeful working atmosphere and good progress in learning, such as was evident in a lesson of lower-achieving pupils who discussed their text, 'Z for Zachariah', with sustained interest. Pupils' enthusiasm is also evident in other work, for example Year 7 autobiographical projects.
69. There are some aspects of teaching that are weaker: objectives are sometimes too generalised and do not take sufficient account of what the pupils can already do. For example, the teaching of grammar and idioms sometimes repeats work which has been done in primary schools, and is inappropriate for higher-achieving pupils who already have a secure knowledge and understanding of what the teacher is introducing. Consequently, these pupils are not always challenged appropriately, even though their greater competence in handling English allows them to make better progress than do others.

70. The head of English provides effective leadership, in particular identifying key areas for development such as raising the achievement of boys and building on the literacy strategy in primary schools. Effective strategies include reviewing teaching styles; altering the composition of classes to give equal numbers of boys and girls in the top sets; extending setting arrangements to Year 7, and introducing a wider range of literature designed to appeal to boys are in place. The department is integrating information technology more into the curriculum when the facilities are available. The department also carries out a range of out-of-school activities such as theatre visits, which motivate pupils to reach higher standards.

MATHEMATICS

71. Attainment in mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Improved teaching, particularly of numeracy amongst 11-14 year-olds, has raised the pupils' confidence in number work with and without a calculator. Standards have risen to be above the national average.
72. The about average pattern of pupils' attainment as 11 year-olds has stayed about the same in the past four years, with national test results for 1998 and 1999 showing the absence of really high attainers. In standardised numeracy tests for 11 year-olds, as they start the school, boys have consistently scored below girls for a number of years.
73. Overall, 14 year-olds' standards are above the national average with girls performing better than do the boys. Between 1996 and 1999 the performance of pupils in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds have been close to the national average, with the girls above average and the boys slightly below it. In 1999, the performance of all pupils was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools.
74. Overall, standards of 14-16 year-olds are above the national average and well above the average for similar schools, with no variation between boys and girls in the last year. The proportion of pupils achieving higher, A*-C, GCSE grades between 1997 and 1999 has been consistently above the national average with girls performing better than boys in each year. The year 2000 results show an overall fall in results for A*-C, with boys and girls performing at about the same standard. Between 1997 and 1999, the overall achievement of grades A*-G has been consistently above the national average for both boys and girls.
75. Standards of work produced by 11-14 year-olds are above average. Pupils' number skills in Years 7 and 8 are good. Some higher-attaining Year 9 pupils were hesitant with number tables, suggesting that they have not derived as much benefit from the National Numeracy Strategy as pupils lower down the school. Work with sequences, looking for patterns and predicting the next term begins well in Year 7 and there is a good development of investigative work up to Year 9. There is evidence of pupils' growing skill and confidence in presenting their investigations. All pupils can handle fractions, decimal numbers and metric measures confidently. By Year 9, higher attainers can work well without a calculator and are confident in handling algebraic expressions and solving simple equations. Lower-attaining pupils handle simple equations well but lack confidence with more complex expressions. All pupils, but especially those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to attainment on entry, and achievement is in line with standards in national tests for 14 year-olds.
76. The standards of work of 14-16 year-olds are above average and in some areas very good. Given the achievement on entry to Year 10, this reflects good progress for most pupils, including those with special educational needs. In much of the investigative work standards are well above average and all pupils write at length about their work. Good information technology skills enable the pupils to manipulate and present data in this

work. Pupils with special educational needs have a good range of skills in information technology and produce some well-presented investigations. Work in shape and space builds well on the work done up to the age of 14. Some high quality graphical work was seen in pupils' books. Whilst most pupils can handle well algebraic ideas, such as simultaneous equations, some lower-attainers lack confidence in the formulation and manipulation of algebraic expressions. The highest-attaining Year 10 class follows an intensive course and takes GCSE intermediate papers at the end of the year and higher papers at the end of the following year. This has worked well in recent years with nearly all the pupils achieving a grade B at the end of Year 10 and a grade A or A* at the end of Year 11. Pupils work well individually and in pairs and clearly enjoy work in mathematics. There is a good degree of independence in some of their learning, but they are not given enough encouragement in this.

77. The quality of teaching is good. It is very marginally better amongst 11-14 year-olds than 14-16 year-olds. Lessons are well planned with a variety of teaching strategies to make effective use of time in both double and single lessons. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils, including those with special educational needs. Many lessons start with a number game or a brisk series of questions based on previous work. In these sessions, teachers make good use of the small white boards or number fans with which pupils show their answers, to enable them to gauge the degree of whole-class understanding.
78. Good use is made of extra in-class support in lessons with lower achieving pupils, particularly when pupils are working on examples. In a Year 10 class dealing with algebraic formulae the quality of one-to-one support possible with two teachers in the class was a major factor in the very good learning that was achieved. At the end of this lesson, both teachers collaborated on a number square puzzle motivating the class to attempt some difficult mental arithmetic. The good individual support provided by the teacher in some lessons, particularly those without extra in-class support, is sometimes, however, at the expense of promoting independent learning and sustaining challenge.
79. Pupils are well behaved and willing to work when given tasks match their attainment. They can be very supportive of each other when working in pairs and individually. The good relationships between pupils and teachers are a major factor in the good standards achieved in mathematics. In a middle attainment Year 7 group of enthusiastic pupils, the teacher used well-prepared materials to challenge them to predict the next term in a sequence. The pupils clearly enjoyed this, as they made very good progress in their understanding of the minimum amount of information needed to make a prediction.
80. The department is well managed and although all the teachers have significant teaching responsibilities in other subjects they work well as a team sharing resources and good practice. There is a clear focus on improving teaching, which has raised its quality, and to further develop the work in numeracy. General resources are satisfactory and there is now good computer provision to support work in mathematics. There is no provision of appropriate information technology to support teaching in the classroom and this aspect is not sufficiently embedded in the schemes of work.

SCIENCE

81. Science has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is now good; the pupils use resources that are better matched to their levels of attainment in most cases, especially those with special educational needs, and pupils generally do better in the subject than in the other subjects they take at GCSE.

Standards have risen and are above average. Accommodation, the main weakness found during the previous inspection, remains poor and continues to undermine standards.

82. The attainment of both 14 and 16 year-olds is above the national average. In the three years up to and including 1999, the proportion of 14 year-olds attaining Level 5 (that expected) and above has increased slightly each year, every year being above the national average for all schools. In these three years, there has been no consistent pattern in the attainment of boys and girls, but in 1999 girls' attainment at Level 5 and above was better than the boys, but not at Level 6 and above. Compared with similar schools, the results in 1999 are well above average. Teacher assessed levels for both 1998 and 1999 have closely followed the results obtained in tests. In 2000, the school results are much improved on the previous year, with the proportion of pupils attaining both Levels 5 and 6 each increasing by well over ten per cent.
83. At GCSE there has been a slight decrease over the last four years in the percentage of pupils attaining the higher A*-C grades in double award science, but all results have been above the national average. In 1999, both boys and girls performed significantly better in science than in their other subjects. However, there has not been a consistent pattern in the attainment of boys and girls, with boys attaining more of the higher grades in 1999, but less in 2000.
84. Taken as a whole, the standards in science are above average and reflect the work of the department to raise attainment. Analysis of what the pupils are able to do allows the department to predict each pupil's expected grades at both key stages. However, most pupils are attaining one or more grades above this, both in national tests at 14 and in GCSE as 16 year-olds. Achievement is, therefore, good.
85. Inspection evidence shows that attainment matches test and examination results and is above average. Pupils in the top set Year 9 not only have developed a good understanding about planet orbit length and distance from the sun, but can also describe how and why certain planets are only visible at dawn and dusk. Pupils in the lower set in Year 10 describe scientific processes such as photosynthesis and respiration accurately and write word equations for each. Those with special educational needs are achieving well, in Year 11, for example they know the features of different types of rocks and describe how they are formed. Pupils with specific in-class learning support are helped to achieve well by being kept to the job in hand and by having resources matched effectively to their needs. In many cases, these resources have been specifically produced by the science teachers and reflect an improvement since the previous inspection.
86. The good quality of teaching has a direct effect on raising standards and the achievement of all pupils. It has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching was never less than satisfactory and, in over half of the observed lessons, it was very good and occasionally excellent, especially amongst classes of 14-16 year-old pupils. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils, and use their subject knowledge to question pupils' understanding in different ways. They foster good relationships between themselves and the pupils in their care. Lessons are planned well using the limited, but adequate, resources. Here the department is supported well by the laboratory technician. Frequently, the lessons start with revision of previous work and the aim of the lesson is shared with pupils. In the very best lessons, pupils are challenged throughout as teachers keep up a brisk pace, and develop understanding by constant reinforcement. A good example of this was seen in a Year 8 group, which included several pupils with special educational needs. Here, pupils were continually challenged by the teacher to develop their understanding of pressure related to force and area using practical demonstrations and everyday examples. Homework, when set, normally builds on the work covered in the lesson, but tasks lack variety. There are

many instances of pupils answering questions, but few examples of extended or creative writing except the evaluation of practical investigations. Written work is marked regularly following the school and department marking policies, an improvement since the previous inspection, but it lacks detail of how improvements can be made. Pupils react well to science; they clearly enjoy the subject and respond to the challenges presented to them. They apply themselves fully, behave well and work safely and collaboratively during practical sessions despite the cramped conditions in the rooms. Written work is generally of a high standard with little incomplete or untidy work seen. The few weaknesses seen in teaching occur when pupils are presented with tasks that are too simple for them, such as in mixed groups in Year 7 where higher attaining pupils were not challenged sufficiently when given simple classification tasks.

87. Learning opportunities are satisfactory because of the ingenuity of the teachers in compensating the deficiencies of the accommodation that severely restricts the range of teaching methods that can be used. For example, strategies to improve literacy skills, such as group discussions and reporting back and the use of information technology as a tool to help independent research are fewer than desirable, because there is not enough suitable room to carry them out. Whilst the pupils use computers effectively to analyse data on human variation and produce practical investigations for the assessments for 14 year-olds, the department has not built in the data capture aspect.
88. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and is undergoing relevant management training to help with aspects such as development planning. He heads a team of experienced senior staff. The department plan does not follow the school plan and contains insufficient detail of success criteria, responsibilities, resource implications and cost as well as an overview of development for more than one year.

ART and DESIGN

89. Because teaching and the pupils' attitudes to learning are good most pupils make good progress, attaining average standards as 14 year-olds and above average standards as 16 year-olds.
90. At the time of the previous inspection the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE higher grades, A*-C, was very low. Since then, year-on-year improvement had, by 1999, brought it close to the national average for all schools. When compared with similar schools attainment is above average. In 2000, attainment has improved further, but as yet there is no national data available to draw comparisons.
91. About three-quarters of 14 year-old pupils in 1999 were meeting or exceeding national expectations, which is similar to the national picture. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9 is similar to this. This can be seen, for example, in the sound quality of self-portrait projects in Year 9. Sketchbooks show that pupils can research ideas well through drawing, and by collecting visual information using a digital camera. They respond with interest to the good teacher demonstration, which helps them to see how best they might apply colour and begin painting. Good teaching that, for example, encourages pupils to discuss the self-portraits of Rembrandt and Van Gogh further improves this. Pupils look critically at the way these portraits were made, and how the inner feelings of the subjects are explored through both expression and the use of colour. This again provides pointers to help them respond creatively in their own self-portrait paintings. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress both in their understanding about art and when making it.
92. As 14-16 year-olds, the pupils collect information well and study it effectively to produce two and three-dimensional artwork using a variety of suitable media. What pupils do

less well in the 14-16-age range is to ensure that their sketchbooks have the right balance between work produced directly from observation and collecting visual material from other sources. This means that they draw less frequently than they should. Throughout the school, the pupils' attitudes to their learning are always good. They listen to instructions and show inquisitiveness when answering questions. They always want to find out how they may improve, they behave well and above all enjoy art.

93. The overall good quality of teaching increasingly encourages pupils' own creativity and a degree of independence, especially as 14-16 year-olds. This approach means that pupils are well prepared for the external examination. For example, pupils currently in Year 10 are encouraged to collect visual information about the local area. They then explore ways in which this same starting point can be harnessed creatively in different directions, for example printmaking or ceramic work. Pupils are well informed about how well they are doing, assessment is regular and appropriately designed to help them improve further. A particularly good feature of assessment is the end of year displays. These help to review progress and attainment, and are particularly valuable in reviewing the curriculum.
94. Throughout the school, pupils are given projects that make up a balanced curriculum. This is quite remarkable considering the poor accommodation. The room is too small, storage is inadequate and there is not enough display space - not only for the work of pupils, but also for visually stimulating resources, which as a consequence are, whilst satisfactory in the circumstances, in short supply. Standards are raised by visits to galleries and by joint projects with a local gallery. As a result, art makes a good contribution to the pupils' cultural development. There is insufficient attention within the whole curriculum to work designed to broaden pupils' understanding of different cultures, and which is explicitly designed to foster spiritual and moral development.
95. This is a single teacher department which is well managed and which recently has been reorganised into a creative arts cluster with music and physical education. Because this arrangement is so new it is impossible to make a judgement about its effectiveness. The main problem with a single person department is that it is not possible to share ideas and expertise and links with specialists in other schools are under-developed.
96. Since the previous inspection standards have improved and teaching is now consistently good. Pupils' attitudes described then as sound or better are now constantly good. Accommodation was poor then and still is. The curriculum has improved significantly and funding is now adequate.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Good teaching, coupled with the pupils' very good attitude to learning, mean that all make good progress and achieve above average standards as 14 and 16 year-olds.
98. As 14 year-olds, most pupils are meeting national expectations. In 1999, more of them attained higher National Curriculum levels than average.
99. In 1999 the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE higher-grades, A*-C, was in line with national averages for all schools and when compared to similar schools was better than this. Rates of improvement in this subject are, however, slower than in most others in the school.
100. Pupils who are at the moment in Year 9 show levels of attainment similar to those reached last year. For example, in a lesson where pupils were combining a number of different subsystems to make a sensing device, they developed their own design brief well, combining both written work and drawings. As designs evolve they draw plans, prepare suitable cuttings lists for materials, and apply the information they have learnt about electronic circuits. Throughout this process opportunities are seized to teach new skills and to deepen pupils' understanding about the technology they are using. For example, when any pupil needs to learn a new skill or experiences a problem which provides a learning opportunity for all, then good teaching capitalises on this, with the result that learning is improved for all. This, coupled with the pupils' willingness to learn and to make and finish products to a good standard, means that attainment is above average. Similar standards are seen in food technology lessons. In a lesson where Year 9 pupils experimented with specialist food preparation equipment, confident teaching encouraged them to demonstrate the equipment to the whole class. These presentations showed that pupils can break down tasks in to small manageable parts; give good evaluative information about the equipment; and stimulate good discussion and whole-class participation. As a result, all pupils make good progress and attain National Curriculum levels that are above average.
101. The attitudes of 14-16 year-olds to learning are often very good and never less than good. Teaching too is good. For example, in a Year 10 food lesson where pupils tested products that had been made by varying ingredients, pupils were stimulated into making thoughtful responses by the teacher's good preparation, such as providing vocabulary sheets of descriptive words appropriate to the task, and by good well-focused questions. Thus pupils learn about the often subtle changes in flavour, texture and consistency of food. Skills of analysis and evaluation are developed as a result, which help them to understand the way the food industry approaches product evaluation. Levels of attainment reflect the standards, which are appropriate for pupils who will obtain higher-grade GCSE qualifications. Similar levels of attainment are reached by 14-16 year-olds when they design and make products, using resistant materials. For example, in a Year 10 lesson where pupils are designing and making their first major GCSE project, they built on the skills developed as 11-14 year-olds, confidently developing design briefs and tackling a wide range of design problems. Teachers manage complex situations well, ensuring that all pupils are provided with technical and individual help. This ensures that lessons proceed at a brisk pace, that pupils develop appropriate skills and achieve the appropriate GCSE standards.
102. Pupils at both key stages know how well they are doing. This is because they are given good feedback in lessons. Their work is marked regularly and the systems for recording attainment are well matched to both National Curriculum requirements and the GCSE examination. A good feature of the way assessment is carried out is the end-of-year displays. These are used for internal moderation, assessing achievement and reviewing the content of the curriculum. The department is less good at using the data collected about pupils' attainment over time. For example since the previous

inspection, the attainment of 16 year-olds has risen and fallen back, but the department has not used information such as the pattern of attainment of 14 year-olds to try and understand why attainment has followed this trend.

103. The curriculum is satisfactory, providing good coverage of the National Curriculum and the requirements of the GCSE syllabus. Food technology contributes to the understanding of different cultures by making and tasting food from other countries, but such learning is not well established across the whole department, which is a weakness. Access to computers has improved since the previous inspection and their use is more effectively integrated into the work of pupils, as is computer-aided design and manufacture. However, this latter provision is still under-developed.
104. The single multi-material workshop for resistant materials is a satisfactory learning environment, but storage for materials and finished work is inadequate. The materials preparation area is also too small. The depressing food technology building is inadequate to meet modern food hygiene requirements. The only reason why standards are so good is because of resourceful teaching. There is no technical assistance in the department, which does cause difficulties, particularly in the preparation of materials and the maintenance of tools and equipment. For example, chisels are not as sharp as they should be, so pupils use them less effectively.
105. Since the previous inspection the department has maintained the good standards of attainment satisfactorily. The quality of teaching and the pupils' attitudes have been maintained. The standard of graphics in 14 year-olds' design folders has improved. Access to information technology has improved for all pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

106. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection report. In 1999, attainment was in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9. From observations of books and lessons this is also true of the current Year 9. This indicates good progress across the three years. Pupils display satisfactory mapping, graphical and diagrammatic skills. They are able to carry out investigative and enquiry tasks on the countries and geographical themes they study in an effective manner. Many pupils however, particularly but not exclusively the boys, display weak use of punctuation, capital letters and many find sentence construction difficult. By the end of Year 11, standards in June 2000 were well below the national average for higher grades, particularly the boys. It is important to note however that all pupils gained a grade. Indications early in the current Year 11 show standards above the national average. Pupils display good and in the case of the higher attainers, very good investigative and analytical skills, for example, in effective field study activities, analysis and evaluation of urban growth patterns in Clitheroe. Pupils use graphs and numerical methods well to analyse and evaluate data.
107. In 1999 and 2000 the GCSE results were disappointingly below average, particularly the number of boys gaining higher A*-C grades. In previous years grades achieved by both boys and girls were above the national average for all grades. Indications in the current Year 11 suggest a return to this position in 2001. GCSE results in 1999 were just below the national average for higher A*-C grades but above the national average for overall A*-G grades. They were well above the averages for similar schools. Girls attained at a higher level than did the boys. These results showed a decline on the 1997 and 1998 results, when both boys and girls attained above the national average. Both a scrutiny of work and classroom observations suggest this 'blip' should be rectified in 2001, as achievement among 14-16 year-olds is above average.
108. Teaching in all lessons observed was good with a small proportion of very good practice. Lesson planning is thorough and clear and appropriate aims and tasks are set

for pupils, which leads to a good quality of learning. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use information technology to assist enquiry tasks. They are given a good range of practical tasks to develop skills associated with mapping, for example, field sketching in Year 7 and the urban study on Clitheroe in the GCSE course. Video is well used to develop thought about economic development, for example, in Year 10, when examining the influence of de-forestation on the Amazon forest ecosystem. There is still a tendency however, in some lessons, for the teaching to be over directed, which results in pupils becoming too dependent on the teacher. This was a weakness also identified in the previous inspection. Pupils are given a good introduction to a range of different countries in depth and in case studies to explore geographical ideas and theories. Marking is very thorough and gives pupils good guidance on how to improve. Progress and achievement overall are good and pupils with special educational needs make equal progress. Good progress is not only associated with good teaching but also results from the positive attitudes shown by most pupils who are keen to learn.

109. Geography is well managed and good improvements have been made in the planning of the scheme of work to meet National Curriculum requirements. Assessment procedures are now satisfactory. There is no effective use of assessment data or National Curriculum level descriptors to inform pupils of the standard they have achieved and to indicate how they can improve their work. The subject development plan is out of line with the whole school plan.

HISTORY

110. Standards and teaching have improved since the previous inspection and further plans to maintain this trend are in place.
111. The attainment of 14 year-old pupils at the end of Year 9 is in line with expectations and the pupils with special educational needs do well. National Curriculum levels are compared with geography and English to ensure reliability of judgements about standards. By the end of Year 9, pupils can order events in time satisfactorily and explain how changes in people's lives have resulted from religious, political and economic conflict throughout history from Roman times to World War II. Through handling artefacts and facsimile extracts from original documents, political cartoons and statistics they learn to select carefully appropriate evidence, make deductions about what life was like and express opinions about cruelty and injustice. For example, in a Year 9 lesson about factory conditions in the nineteenth century, pupils were able to compile successfully a factory inspector's report using information from eight sources as evidence to support moral judgements and justify their emotional reactions. There is no fieldwork for 11-14 year-olds, so pupils are missing opportunities for taking greater responsibility in designing an enquiry and using human resources. This undermines achievement, which is nevertheless satisfactory.
112. The attainment of 16 year-olds is well below national averages as far as GCSE higher grades, A*-C, are concerned, although three-quarters of pupils performed according to, or better than, predictions based on previous attainment. Those who were entered also performed well below the average of pupils in similar schools nationally. However, the number of pupils choosing the subject remains too low to make reliable judgements. Measures in place to solve this problem include a new examination, more relevant study topics and classroom displays to help Year 9 pupils to make informed choices. In the current Year 11, fresh strategies include extra revision programmes and involving parents in supporting pupils to make sure that coursework is completed. Some pupils take the Certificate of Achievement as a more appropriate alternative.
113. Overall achievement is satisfactory and most pupils are aware of the need to keep their target grade in sight. As 16 year-olds, pupils have a well-developed sense of historical time and use appropriate terminology to make comparisons across time. Throughout

their studies of crime and punishment and economic, political and social reform, pupils examine the influences that have evolved today's system of justice and citizenship. For example, a Year 11 lesson about nineteenth century social reformers challenged pupils to evaluate the measures used to confront poverty. Several pupils were keen to emphasise the link between independence and self-esteem; others drew evidence from modern parallels. They are efficient in scanning sources, precise in note-making, becoming self-sufficient in organising different types of information into studies of impressive length. The limited use of computers means that pupils are missing opportunities to manipulate census data and to access web-sites, which would challenge them to make judgements about the appropriateness of information and to seek globally for original material. There is also not enough fieldwork to broaden pupils' range of skills and put them in touch with the richness of historical tradition in their local area.

114. Teaching is good overall, at times it is very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils become confident and make rapid progress because lessons have a clear structure, move briskly along and there are many opportunities for them to check and reinforce what they are learning. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress in these situations. The importance of being involved was well illustrated in a Year 7 lesson about the professionalism of the Roman army. Pupils were so wide-eyed and eager to handle the shoulder plates, breastplate, helmet and other parts of a soldier's armour that their speculation and questions accelerated and deepened understanding. In such oral activities, pupils are articulate because teachers allow them time to develop what they want to say into full sentences, expect them to reason through their contributions and to comment on the views of others. Pupils' writing shows a consistently good level of factual accuracy, because they are accustomed to searching in pairs through a range of different sources, and then sharing key ideas and facts with the whole class to tease out wider implications. Homework complements this effectively. Planning, whether for written or visual presentations, is an established habit. For example, in devising a pamphlet about law and order in Roman times, the planning phase led two Year 10 higher-attaining pupils to devise case studies because they wanted the guide to bring the facts alive.
115. Teaching does not make enough use of video extracts to bring history off the page and to allow pupils to share personal and moral responses to actions and events which cause suffering or joy. The demands on higher-attaining pupils are still too few. The use of information technology to improve learning is unsatisfactory.
116. Leadership of the department is satisfactory; it is efficient and outlined priorities are appropriate. There has been a positive response to recommendations made at the previous inspection. Day-to-day monitoring of pupils' progress is satisfactory, although there is no portfolio of work illustrating National Curriculum levels. The evaluation of teaching is unsatisfactory, as there is still insufficient collaboration between teaching colleagues to share good practice; nor is collaboration with other Heads of Department for developing management skills close enough.

INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Since the previous inspection the resources for information technology have greatly improved and there is a good development plan to maintain the quality of this provision. The establishment of a core team to teach the subject has resulted in improved teaching and standards have risen to well above the national average.
118. Teacher assessments show the pupils' standards on entry, as 11 year-olds, to have improved a little over the past three years, but very few attain standards that are above those expected of pupils of this age.
119. Teacher assessments of 14 year-olds at the end of Year 9 indicate very good achievement with many pupils reaching standards well above those expected nationally. There is no significant difference between girls and boys.
120. The proportion of pupils achieving higher, A*-C, GCSE grades in 1998 and 1999 was well above the national average with the girls performing better than did the boys in each year. The year 2000 results for a GCSE short course show an overall fall in results in higher grade, A*-C, passes. In 1998 and 1999, the overall achievement of grades A*-G was 100 per cent. Taken as a whole, the standards of 16 year-olds are well above the national average and high in comparison with similar schools, with girls performing the better.
121. Standards of work of 11-14 year-olds are above average. With the limited level of achievement on entry this shows good progress. Pupils gain confidence rapidly in Year 7, as they acquire good basic skills in word processing, spreadsheets and graphics packages. They make good progress and by Year 9 pupils of all abilities have acquired substantial skills across the full range of applications of information technology. Incorporating diagrams, tables and graphics in documents is accomplished with skill and confidence. Some pupils with special educational needs find this work particularly motivating and although they sometimes still lack confidence they can produce very good work.
122. Standards of work of 14-16 year-olds are very good. Work in Year 10 builds rapidly on the work in Year 9 with pupils developing their skills in graphics, desktop publishing and presentation. Work in control and modelling involves generating data from simple experiments, averaging repeated results to minimise error and tabulating the results. This experimental work is presented to a very high standard with very good illustrations and pupils writing at length to explain their results. By Year 11, pupils are confident of their skills and understanding and can work well under realistic commercial pressures delivering quality work to deadlines. The quality of work of 14-16 year-olds reflects very good progress for all pupils. The cross-curricular delivery of information technology in this key stage is well mapped by the department, except for the few pupils not following an information technology course. The recently acquired data logging equipment allows the school to fully meet the syllabus requirements for using computers to measure changes in science experiments such as temperature, but it is not yet effective in operation. There are some other weaknesses, for instance in the use of information technology in history and modern foreign languages, as well as science.
123. The quality of teaching is very good, with no difference between the key stages. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and teach with confidence. Many lessons start with a demonstration highlighting the particular features of the software that might be useful for the assignment. These sessions make very good use of the large screen display linked to the teacher's computer and often enable pupils to commence individual work within minutes of arriving at the class.

124. Good use is made of extra in-class support in lessons with lower-achieving pupils. In practical classes the additional support often provided by the technician makes a significant contribution to pupils' confidence in working with new systems. In a mixed attainment Year 9 class, working on illustrating our current success in the Olympics, a range of published material was available to provide ideas and information. Good in-class and technician support ensured effective use was made of the information and of the commercial presentation software, to complete the assignment within the lesson.
125. Pupils are well behaved and responsible when working with computers. They can be very supportive of each other when working in pairs. In a Year 11 class pupils were given the technical details of a range of computer peripherals. Working in pairs they had to create and give a presentation to the rest of the class, of one of the devices, within the lesson time. All the class responded positively to the challenge of the time constraint. The work was completed to a very high standard using the full range of computer graphics techniques and all the presentations were completed in the time.
126. The department is well led and well managed and although most of the teachers also teach other subjects they work well as a team. There is a clear focus in the department to maintain and develop teachers' technical competence ensuring confident teaching. General resources are good and the well-equipped accommodation for computing helps to raise standards and contrasts with much of the rest of the buildings.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

127. Standards are now above average and there has been a good improvement since the previous inspection, both in the quality of teaching and in pupils' attitudes to the subject.
128. In 1999, GCSE results in French at higher grades, A*-C, were slightly higher than the national average for all maintained schools, and higher than in the previous year. They were well above the averages for similar schools. Girls achieved particularly good results, much higher than the national average, and higher than their attainment in most other subjects. Boys' grades were much lower than the national average and their attainment was lower than in most other subjects. The grades obtained by all pupils at grades A*-G were in line with the national average. This year, GCSE results were lower, adversely affected by a few boys failing to gain predicted grades in the A*-C range.
129. Teachers' assessments show the pupils' attainment as 14 year-olds to be above average, a standard corresponding to the level of the work seen in class. Soon after entering the school as 11 year-olds, pupils can follow lessons conducted in French, and understand tapes and television programmes. Most pupils can confidently exchange greetings and make simple classroom requests. Higher attainers conduct short spontaneous conversations for the benefit of the whole class. At first, pupils read and write short phrases and captions, but quickly expand the range and variety of their expression. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 8 were seen talking and writing convincingly about how the weather affects their leisure pursuits. Well before the end of Year 9, most pupils are using reflexive verbs to describe their daily routine, and can refer to past and future events such as family holidays.
130. Between 14 and 16 years of age, many pupils learn to express a wider range of ideas and opinions on subjects such as teenage concerns or the environment. They adapt their style of writing to produce simple tourist brochures and formal letters. Some pupils use computers to research and present lengthy, detailed pieces, including profiles of

media and sports personalities. The best writing is stylish and imaginative, often conveying the humour or pathos of the situations described. Lower-attainers, including some with special educational needs, consolidate and extend everyday topics they have covered previously, and simulate activities ranging from work experience to television game shows. The performance of boys has improved and many are now achieving high standards of fluency and accuracy in writing equalling, and in some cases surpassing, that of the girls. A few lower-attainers have difficulty recalling work less thoroughly taught in the past.

131. The quality of teaching, by subject specialists and non-specialist staff, is always good and a substantial proportion is very good. Teachers are fluent in French, selecting their language accurately to challenge high-attainers and support the least able. They plan stimulating and enjoyable lessons, including sequences of short activities that exercise different skills in turn. They have high expectations of all pupils, encouraging them to show what they know and can do in dialogues and presentations based on authentic French materials. They co-operate effectively with their classroom assistants, to create lessons with a busy, purposeful and cheerful atmosphere. Pupils mostly respond to the challenge, persevering with difficulties and seeking assistance where necessary. Only a few lose interest, and they respond to individual attention, so lessons proceed briskly with few interruptions. Teachers use audio-visual equipment effectively, although their use of computers is unsatisfactory: it is limited and infrequent. They insist on pupils contributing to the presentation and summary of lessons, providing a constantly shifting focus of attention for the class, and opportunities for monitoring progress. Teachers draw skilfully on the conventions of the literacy hour, introducing and summarising their lessons and formally explaining grammar points. Pupils benefit from their teachers' regular and constructive marking and individual advice, both higher and lower-attainers receiving any extra support they require. Teachers regularly set homework that extends and reinforces the content of their lessons, but the response and application of a few pupils is less than they show in class.
132. The department is well led and staffed, and has adequate resources. Teachers and their assistants have worked successfully since the previous inspection to raise pupils' achievement, particularly that of boys. The up-to-date curriculum, outlined in clear and helpful documents, is well planned and innovative. For some pupils, work done in class is enriched by holidays in France and Germany. Others benefit from extra help in preparing for the GCSE. Teachers and pupils have worked hard to create a bright and supportive environment in dismal accommodation. Although not the worst in the school, the accommodation enjoyed by the department is poor and has a negative effect upon standards. The rooms are so damp they preclude the use of computers, displays fall from the walls and textbooks deteriorate rapidly through being kept in wet conditions. The teachers' good personal knowledge of their pupils is not used effectively enough by setting more formal, individual targets, and by making them more aware of their own progress.

MUSIC

133. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards in music have improved and are now average. Pupils' composition techniques are now sound and improving. Pupils' attitudes are very good and teaching in the department is very good. There is ongoing planning and development of information technology, although the provision remains unsatisfactory.
134. Teacher assessments for 14-year-old pupils show that attainment is overall in line with national expectations. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not offered GCSE music in the school options. The school does not receive information on pupils' prior attainment in music for Year 7 pupils. However, schemes of work and good lesson planning meet the varied needs of

most pupils, including those with special educational needs.

135. Current standards of 14-year-old pupils are overall average. Pupils follow a largely practical course, which also includes opportunities for practising literacy skills. Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to the basic elements of music, note values, and perform rhythmically based pieces well. Pupils in Year 8 discover form in music satisfactorily. Higher-achieving pupils are able to compose a round and further develop this into a composition in ternary form. In addition, pupils are able to sing a round in three parts. Singing is confident and, in lessons seen, enjoyed by Year 8 pupils. Pupils in Year 9 research the uses of music in the media, leading to the composing of a piece of music, which would be suitable for a news programme on television. The low allowance of curriculum time and the small area in which pupils have to work, is a strong contributory factor in the under-achievement of one-third of Year 9 pupils. Composition is skilfully taught. However, pupils' achievement is overall unsatisfactory mainly because of the limitation of time and space to work safely on keyboards.
136. Teaching overall is very good. The teacher has a very good knowledge of the subject and uses a variety of skilful strategies to make sure that all pupils understand the aims of the lesson. Lessons are very well planned and a wide range of teaching methods is used, which enables all abilities to learn, including those with special educational needs. Activities to improve literacy skills are a regular feature of all lessons. Attention is paid to the learning and spelling of the subject vocabulary; pupils are encouraged to present any written work with care. The head of music is trained in information technology and schemes of work include provision for pupils' development in this area. Resources are planned in advance; however, keyboards cannot be used safely in the small teaching room area. Lessons are lively, well paced and of the widest range of activities possible in the limited space. A peripatetic woodwind teacher supports the department effectively and thirteen pupils receive lessons on a variety of instruments. The head of department teaches singing to three pupils.
137. The very good quality of teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning, which is good throughout. Pupils are very well behaved and listen carefully. They respond well to quick question and answer sessions. In practical activities, they listen attentively to the teachers, and respond well whilst listening to the teacher and to their peers. Instruments are treated with respect and pupils exercise control when they are not performing. Pupils participate eagerly in performance. They move carefully and quietly in and out of the room. Books and instruments are collected without fuss, taking particular care when a pupil is in a wheelchair. Pupils are polite to the teacher and do not speak out of turn. When they do speak, it is with clarity and confidence. When performing to the remainder of the class, pupils concentrate and put effort into their work. Teachers are friendly, with a professional manner with the pupils: they expect and get high standards of manners and behaviour. This results in an atmosphere that is conducive to good music-making.
138. The music curriculum is broad and balanced except for the limited opportunities for use of technology. However, full use is made of percussion instruments with a broad cultural base. The department has worked hard to include singing in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. Standards in the school choir are very good. Numbers are high and pupils are able to sing unaccompanied songs, with confidence and expression. Pupils in the choir are given the opportunities to sing at various school events and in the community.
139. Accommodation is cramped and limits pupils' opportunities in music. Curriculum time for Year 9 pupils is well below the recommended, so these pupils do not get their full entitlement of the National Curriculum in music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140. The previous inspection deemed standards in physical education to be satisfactory. This is still the case. The small gymnasium was judged to be limiting attainment in gymnastics. This is still the case. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning overall mean that good progress has been made since then.
141. Both boys and girls enter the school as 11 year-olds with standards that are just below the expectation for similar aged pupils nationally.
142. Achievement is satisfactory, so the standards of pupils by the age of 14 are overall in line with the expectations of pupils of a similar age nationally, in knowledge and understanding and performance skills. Based on limited evidence, the standards of pupils are also about in line with national standards by the age of 16. There is no examination course in physical education, because of the poor facilities.
143. By the age of 14, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their learning. In gymnastics pupils learn to develop controlled balances, often in pairs, and refine techniques such as matching, mirroring and counterbalancing, particularly when developing synchronised sequences in pairs, using mats and small apparatus. At the same time pupils develop an awareness of the need for style and elegance in performance, and learn to evaluate that performance.
144. In games, specifically netball, pupils learn to pass and receive a ball appropriately, and then transfer these skills into a game situation, where they have to pass or defend under pressure. Pupils develop an understanding of how to utilise space and develop tactical awareness, for example when anticipating the movements of an opposing player.
145. In dance, pupils develop the confidence and ability to innovate and develop coordinated movements into a choreographed sequence. Higher-achieving pupils develop a good capacity for personal interpretation when changing their patterns of movement as individuals or in groups.
146. It was not possible to observe any Year 10 lessons during the inspection. In Year 11 pupils were observed doing recreational activities in the local sports centre: football, jazz dance, climbing and fitness training. The limited evidence available suggests that most 14-16 year-olds make satisfactory gains in skills as well as enjoyment.
147. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good and occasionally excellent practice. Good teaching is characterised by several qualities. Particularly in short lessons, teachers maintain a purposeful atmosphere from the start of the lesson, succinctly and clearly explaining the objectives to the pupils and then getting them quickly involved in activities, so as to focus their energies and concentration and utilise the time effectively. This is particularly evident in gymnastics lessons where teachers involve the pupils in warm-up routines and a series of progressive sequences of controlled balances. Teachers take opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding, through questioning, of the importance of correct preparation and the benefits of exercise. The teaching is confident and brisk, based on good subject knowledge, conveyed effectively to pupils, who listen well. In gymnastics and netball, pupils demonstrate good practice to the rest of the class, and this helps them to improve and also motivates them to do well. This sense of motivation is also the product of good relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves. They work well together. The cooperative spirit is particularly important in developing good gymnastic routines. Teachers' classroom management is always very good, with due attention given to safety issues. Activities are planned in such a way that in a short space of time, pupils progress through a challenging series of skills practices, with opportunities to evaluate their progress when time permits. Skilful and enthusiastic

teaching in dance gives pupils the confidence to experiment and increases their ability to interpret music and improvise routines effectively.

148. The head of department provides effective leadership. For example effective support is given to non-specialist teachers, increasing their confidence, and teachers are encouraged to undertake appropriate professional development. A detailed scheme of work has been written to assist coherent planning across the department. The commitment of the teachers is shown in the extensive range of out-of-school practices. Pupils are very enthusiastic about these opportunities and they are a testament to the popularity of physical education as a subject. A very high proportion of pupils takes part in these voluntary activities. The school operates successful teams in netball, football, table tennis and cross-country, and has won a national competition in dance. The high rate of participation by pupils helps to raise achievement in physical education.
149. Pupils make sound progress principally because of the skill and commitment of teachers and the good relationships and motivation, which they generate in pupils. However, further progress in raising skill levels is quite severely limited by factors outside the control of the department. Much of the accommodation is poor: the gymnasium in particular is small, antiquated and is a barrier to the successful teaching of some sports. The hard-court area outdoors is small and inappropriately situated. Curriculum organisation also restricts progress in learning. With notable exceptions, single lessons for 11-14 year-olds, when taking into account the time for changing kit at the beginnings and ends of lessons, allow insufficient teaching and learning time. That the pupils make at least satisfactory progress in these lessons is testament to the skill of the teachers. Brief study time for 14-16 year-olds is allocated in such a way that there is no lesson every third week: pupils have too few opportunities for exercise.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. Religious education as a subject has improved significantly since the previous inspection, both in the quality of teaching and in standards achieved by some pupils. There are, however, weaknesses in Years 10 and 11, where too many pupils are still achieving at too low a level. Overall, the improvement since the previous inspection is, however, satisfactory.
151. In 1999, pupils were reaching standards in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus by the end of Year 9. Indications from books and in lessons suggest that the current Year 9 will achieve similar standards. This represents good progress across the three years and a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the previous inspection. Written work has improved in quality and detail. By the end of Year 11, in the full GCSE course, pupils' work is well above the national average for this stage in the course. Currently, overall attainment in Year 11, outside the eleven full GCSE candidates, is below the national average. Results in 1999 in the GCSE short course were significantly below the national average for all and for similar schools for higher grades A*-C. A very high percentage of pupils failing to achieve a grade at all. In the full GCSE course, results were below the national average for higher A*-C grades and overall A*-G grades. In 2000, girls' achievement in the short course was well above that of the boys and above the 1999 average for higher grades. But only a small proportion of the year was entered.
152. Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. In seven out of ten lessons observed teaching was good or better, with some excellent practice. Most lessons are now very well planned and the teachers show enthusiasm and very good knowledge of the subject, which interests and motivates pupils. This combined with positive and hard working responses from most pupils, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, results in good progress in learning. Teaching now gets the pupils to examine different philosophies concerning the existence of God. Good use is made of Biblical texts and

other sacred books to develop understanding. Challenging questions are used to develop pupils' own thinking and there are good opportunities for the development of enquiry skills. Learning is no longer purely factually based. Pupils are being given the opportunity to learn from religions and think about beliefs and values. As a result, knowledge and understanding of rituals, worship and symbolism, associated with the six major faiths studied up to the age of 14, is now satisfactory. In the full GCSE course, teaching is interesting as well as being sensitive to the nature of the topics covered. This was seen in a lesson on the Christian response to marriage and adultery. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the boys on the short course, are not high enough. This is why not all of them gain a grade in the examination. Improved teaching is, however, leading to pupils with special educational needs making equally good progress, but learning support assistants are not briefed sufficiently about the work ahead of lessons, so this reduces their effectiveness. There is still a small amount unsatisfactory teaching, associated with a lack of specialist subject understanding, the use of inappropriate tasks for the pupils and weak classroom management skills.

153. With the provisos mentioned above, there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Attention has been given to effectively linking work to the agreed syllabus and moving to learning from as well as about religions in a purely factual way. Many lessons are now more interesting and motivating for pupils. They are challenged to be active learners and to think. The subject makes a very significant influence on personal development. Standards have improved considerably in the lower years. The challenge now is to raise the level of achievement in the short GCSE course and involve all pupils in the examination. The use of visits and visitors to widen pupils' experience is also under-developed.