

INSPECTION REPORT

ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Huddersfield

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique reference number: 107782

Headteacher: Mr L G Harron

Reporting inspector: Mr K Davitte
15029

Dates of inspection: 6–10 November 2000

Inspection number: 223714

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr P Jenks

Date of previous inspection: 05/02/96

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

All Saints Catholic High School is a voluntary aided mixed 11-18 comprehensive school in the local educational area of Kirklees. There are 956 pupils on roll and the school is about the same size as other secondary schools nationally. There are 80 students in the sixth form with about one-third studying General and National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ). At 16 the majority leave for further studies at other post-16 institutions. Ninety-one pupils (9.5 per cent) are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Twenty-nine pupils speak English as an additional language (3.9 per cent) which is higher than in most schools, but only five are at an early stage of language acquisition. One hundred and sixty pupils (17 per cent) have special educational needs which is average and of these 20 have statements of special educational need which is also average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (14 per cent) is broadly average. Attainment on entry in Year 7 is usually broadly average but is above average for mathematics in the current year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is currently providing a satisfactory standard of education. Academic standards have improved overall in the last year and there is a clear intent by leadership and management to raise standards further. There is a good blend of new teachers and more experienced staff with a significant number having been appointed in the last two years. This is making it possible to raise standards. Overall the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English which are mostly above average
- GCSE results in history which were well above average in 2000 at A*-C and at A* and GCSE results in Spanish which were above average in each of the last two years
- Current standards of teaching in the sixth form in science and design and technology
- Incisive leadership by governors which has set clear targets to raise standards
- The organisation and contribution of support staff in the life of the school
- Opportunities provided for visits to Lourdes where pupils act as helpers to the sick and disabled

What could be improved

- Examination and test results in mathematics and science, which are not consistent from one year to another, and where pupils do not achieve as well as the same pupils achieve in English at the age of 14 and 16
- Standards in physical education, particularly for girls
- The number of students in the sixth form and standards achieved in examinations
- Behaviour, particularly in movement around the school
- Whole-school and departmental planning so that policies and priorities are consistently reinforced
- Meeting legal requirements by teaching physical education to all in Year 11, providing adequate coverage of information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11, improving facilities for food technology, and meeting safety and hygiene requirements fully

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. Major improvements have been made in accommodation and facilities. Teaching has improved from the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory in two out of every five lessons at Key Stage 4 and this is helping current standards to recover from the decline in 1998 and 1999 in National Curriculum tests and at GCSE. The recent very positive upward trend is enabling the school to make up lost ground, but results are not yet as good at GCSE as prior to 1998 when compared with national averages. The improvement in A-level results achieved by 1997 has not been maintained and numbers in the sixth form have shrunk. Management has not succeeded in raising standards in some areas and in particular in physical education. Despite the positive current trends in improving academic standards, progress when judged over the whole of the period since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

In national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 2000 the majority of pupils achieved above average results in English, average results in mathematics and just below average results in science compared with all schools. This is an improvement on 1999 when results were below average in mathematics and well below in science.

GCSE results have been average compared with all schools and similar schools when measured by the points score per pupil. Results when measured by the percentage of pupils succeeding at five or more grades A*-C have not been as good. Even with the substantial improvement from 37.4 per cent in 1999 to 45.2 per cent in 2000 results did not reach the national average of 49 per cent.

Most individual subjects improved their GCSE results in 2000 compared with 1999. Results were above average in several subjects including in English language. Mathematics improved from below average in 1999 to average overall in 2000, despite girls' results being below average. Science improved from below average to near to average. Business studies and design and technology were above average, improving from previous years. The highest results at grades A*-C in individual subjects were in art, history and Spanish and these subjects were also above average in the proportion of top A* or A grades. Weaker results at GCSE were in child development, media studies and religious studies. The target for 50 per cent of pupils to reach five or more A*-C grades in the 2001 GCSE examinations is modest, but there are longer-term objectives to raise standards to higher levels.

Following average results at A-level in 1997 there has been a decline in achievement. The 2000 A-level results were the weakest recorded by the school, although all science candidates achieved an A-E pass and English results were average. The weakest results with small entries were in mathematics, media studies, psychology, sociology and sports studies. In 2000 most students on GNVQ courses attained at least a pass on their course and some attained a merit or distinction.

Standards seen at the inspection reflect the improved national test and GCSE results of 2000 and are mainly average. At A-level standards are getting back to those of pre-2000 when most candidates achieved a pass even though at mainly lower grades. In GNVQ standards are in line with course requirements and similar to 2000.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory: ranges from very good to unsatisfactory.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory: mainly but not exclusively as a result of behaviour out of classrooms. Fixed-term exclusions were high last year.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory: many respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. They are frustrated by those pupils who let the school down.
Attendance	Satisfactory: broadly in line with the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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 standard of teaching and the quality of learning is satisfactory overall. Of 176 observations at the inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of observations and good or better in 58 per cent of lessons. Twelve lessons were unsatisfactory and one was poor with five of these in physical education. The best teaching was in the sixth form where it was good or better in 73 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good overall in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science.

There are many lessons where teachers' good subject knowledge set the right standards for pupils to aim at with particularly good examples seen in English and in science, art, design and technology and GNVQ lessons in the sixth form. In a minority of lessons, including physical education, history and geography, the lack of subject knowledge affects progress and learning. The revised individual education plans at Key Stage 3 for pupils with special educational needs are being used well by teachers to set targets for improvement. Although planning is mostly good it is weak overall in physical education particularly in lessons for girls. Teaching methods are satisfactory and the school mostly meets the needs of all pupils, but

in a minority of lessons seen in English, mathematics, French and history, higher attainers were not challenged sufficiently.

The use of computers varies considerably with shortages of resources being the main problem and they are not used enough across all subjects, including in art. They are well used for the teaching of pupils with multi-sensory difficulties and good use was also seen in GNVQ courses. The management of pupils is good but there are instances where teachers have to be on their guard because of the threat of disruption which a minority of pupils pose. This sometimes prevents teachers from showing themselves at their best. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily but a significant minority of pupils make frequent errors in the spelling of common words. Marking is mostly regular and good in English. Homework was used satisfactorily during the inspection, and positive use was seen in history in extending learning, but significant numbers of parents are concerned about this aspect of the school's work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: mainly broad and balanced. Extra-curricular activities overall are satisfactory but sparse in some areas and there are plans to expand on this provision. Provision for physical education in Year 11 and for ICT in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: staff are well briefed and a new momentum is being provided by the recently appointed co-ordinator (SENCO).
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory: most show equal proficiency in English language and are well provided for. Small numbers at an early stage of acquisition of English were not well provided for at the inspection whilst waiting for planned support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory: good features including clear aims but some inconsistencies in provision affect impact. A well-planned programme at Key Stage 3 for personal and social education. Cultural activities are improving but the school needs to be invigorated with more regular opportunities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory: good careers education. Good team effort by teaching and support staff. Mentoring in Year 11 has worked well and is improving in the sixth form. The monitoring of behaviour is unsatisfactory outside lessons. Very good systems for monitoring attendance. The use of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress is improving and is being well used at Key Stage 4 to raise standards.

The partnership between the school and parents is satisfactory, but there is scope for closer constructive relationships so that concerns raised by parents are tackled more quickly and effectively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: there has been a determined and mostly effective effort by leadership and management to raise standards, working in close co-operation with governors. Successful measures taken in staffing and accommodation stand in contrast with the lack of success achieved in the behaviour of pupils, despite good plans. There are weaknesses in development planning which detract from a whole-school drive.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: governors have a very clear view of what they want their school to be and by when. Decisions on staffing have been bold, incisive and effective. Some statutory requirements in the curriculum are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: an accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Performance data is beginning to be used more effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: targets and deadlines have been set for the sixth form to provide value for money as currently it is being subsidised. Staffing, accommodation and resources are mostly well used. Principles of best value are mostly well applied with very good backup from support staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Pupils work hard and make good progress • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem • The school is helping pupils to become mature and responsible • The school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Greater consistency in setting the right amount of homework • More information on pupils' progress • Closer working relationships with parents • More extra-curricular activities

Inspectors agree with most of the views but pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good. There are aspects of management which are good, but there are too many inconsistencies in application of policy and leadership and management is therefore satisfactory rather than good. There has been concern over homework for some time and the school is not monitoring its use rigorously. There is not enough precise information in annual formal written reports on what pupils can and cannot do and what they need to do to improve further. Extra-curricular activities despite improvements could be expanded further including during lunch hours.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In 2000, results in the school's National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds compared with all schools were above average in English, average in mathematics and just below average in science. Results in English were above average not only at levels expected of 14-year-olds (Level 5 or above) but also at the higher levels (Level 6 or above). The results of 2000 show that pupils with mainly average standards on entry to the school made good progress in English but in mathematics progress was only satisfactory and in science unsatisfactory. Although these results were better than those of 1999 when English was only average and mathematics and science were both below average there is a lack of consistency. The weakest results have been in science which have been below average in three out of the last four years.
2. The overall trend in the combined results in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 has been broadly in line with the national trend since the last inspection in 1996 with English boosting the overall picture.
3. Compared with similar schools (similar schools are defined by the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) overall results at Key Stage 3 in 2000 were above average. They were well above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science.
4. Standards seen at the inspection at the end of Key Stage 3 were average overall taking into account pupils' attainment in all subjects. Standards achieved represent satisfactory progress and achievement from the time of pupils' entry into the school but there are some variations between subjects. Standards in English were above average, and they were average in mathematics and science and therefore similar to the improved test results of 2000. The improving picture in science coincides with the recent appointment of a new head of department, but it is too early yet for the full effect of any new measures to be fully felt. In mathematics and science pupils are not being stretched as much as in English. In other subjects standards are above national expectations in geography and history, and in line with national expectations in art, information and communication technology (ICT), modern languages and physical education. In design and technology standards are currently below average. This has already been recognised by a recently appointed head of department who has the correct strategies in place to tackle weaknesses in design work. In music, standards in appraising and performing were near to average but were below average in composition.
5. GCSE results for each of the last four years were average compared with all schools and similar schools when measured by the points score per pupil. Such standards represent satisfactory progress and achievement by pupils in relation to their attainment when they first joined the school.
6. When GCSE results are measured by the percentage of pupils succeeding at five or more grades A*-C GCSE results are not as good as when measured by the average points score. There have been big swings in recent years. In both 1998 and 1999 the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades was below average with the sharp fall in boys' results the main reason for the decline. In 2000 the steep decline was reversed with 45.2 per cent of all pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades

compared with 37.4 per cent in 1999. This was a considerable improvement but below the national average of 49 per cent.

7. Most individual subjects improved their GCSE results in 2000 compared with 1999. Results were above average in several subjects including in English language. Pupils attained more highly in English language than the same pupils achieved in mathematics and science at GCSE. Even in 1999 when overall school results declined English achieved close to average results compared with below average results in mathematics and well below in science. All three improved in 2000 but only English was above average. Mathematics improved from below average to average, but girls were below average compared with girls nationally. Science improved from well below average in 1999 to below average in 2000 making a significant improvement compared with national averages. The highest results at grades A*-C in individual subjects were in art and history which were well above average and Spanish which was above average and these subjects were also above average in the proportion of top grades A* or A grades. Business studies and design and technology were also above average after below average results in 1999. Weaker results at GCSE were in child development, media studies and religious studies and with small numbers in music. The most marked decline in results from 1999 to 2000 was in religious education, mainly as a result of the below average performance of boys. In 1999 it was the best performing subject and above average but in 2000 was well below the national average.
8. The target which the school has set itself for 50 per cent of pupils reaching five or more A*-C grades in the 2001 GCSE examinations is modest but there are ambitions to build on that progressively in subsequent years.
9. The 2000 GCSE results and the findings of the inspection show clearly that the school is beginning to recover lost ground and is approaching the results attained in most years prior to 1998. The below average results of 1998 and 1999 did however significantly affect the overall trend in GCSE results since the last inspection which have been below the national trend.
10. Small numbers follow the Youth Award programme at Key Stage 4 and in 2000, 63 per cent of pupils achieved Bronze level and 37 per cent achieved Silver. The results in 1999 were better, with two pupils achieving Gold and one the Platinum award. Pupils generally achieve appropriately in relation to programme requirements and their low attainment prior to starting the course.
11. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are average overall representing satisfactory progress. Standards in English are above average. They are average in mathematics and near to average in science. In other subjects, standards are above average in design and technology, geography, history and average in modern foreign languages, media studies and office applications. In ICT standards are below average overall as there is no planned programme of work for every pupil, but in GCSE office applications pupils have average skills in ICT. As at Key Stage 3 standards in appraising and performing in music are average but below average in composition. The majority of boys in physical education attain standards in line with national expectations but girls are below expectations and underachieve.
12. Following average results at A-level in 1997 there has been a decline in achievement at A-level. In 1999 although A-B grades remained below average the overall percentage of A-E grades reached the national average. In the summer of 2000 the situation declined on all counts with the weakest set of results recorded by the school. Results were well below average in relation to the average points score, A-B grades and grades A-E.

Even taking into account that the school has not been successful in attracting its highest attainers at GCSE into its sixth form the results of 2000 were very mixed with more examples of underachievement than pupils exceeding expectations. It was also evident that some pupils were allowed to progress to the sixth form on A-level courses with weak GCSE results and in terms of examination successes gained little benefit.

13. With the exception of English language and general studies, A-level entries were too small in most subjects in 2000 for valid national comparisons to be made. In English language results were average at grades A–E but nearly all the grades were in the D–E category. In general studies which had the largest entry of 20 candidates half achieved A–E grades but that was below average. Biology, chemistry and physics accounted for only seven entries in total but all were successful at A–E grades, but mostly in the C–D category. There was only one grade A recorded, resulting from a lone entry in art. The weakest results with small entries were in mathematics, media studies, psychology, sociology and sports studies where pupils generally underachieved and results in all these subjects were better in 1999. There were only five entries in all at AS-level and two of the three candidates in statistics achieved A grades. The decline in A-level results in 2000 was in contrast to the improved school's results in National Curriculum tests and in GCSE results.
14. Standards in the sixth form are currently better than students attained in their 2000 examination results and mostly in line with the lower pass grades at AS/A-level. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to previous GCSE attainment. Some students who were having difficulties in meeting standards have been guided into alternative career paths.
15. In 2000 students were assessed on intermediate courses in GNVQ in business, health and social care and leisure and tourism and at advanced level in business. Most students attained at least a pass on their course and some attained a merit or distinction. Some are continuing their studies into this year. Completion rates with small numbers are mainly good. A narrower range of courses is currently operating in the school with no advanced business or leisure and tourism. Standards seen at the inspection were mostly in line with course requirements and the subsequent achievement of pass grades.
16. Standards of reading are good across the school with most subjects providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills. Standards of writing are satisfactory overall but vary across the curriculum. Pupils make too many spelling errors even of common words. Standards of numeracy are mainly satisfactory and good at Key Stage 3 where pupils are now bringing better skills with them from their primary schools as a result of their involvement in numeracy projects. This is well supported by the strong emphasis given by the mathematics department in developing pupils' skills in handling number.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils' attitudes towards the school and their work are satisfactory overall and good for students in the sixth form, but there are wide variations ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. In eight per cent of lessons for example, pupils' attitudes were judged to be unsatisfactory. Attitudes vary between and within subjects sometimes depending on the quality of teaching. Most pupils in all subjects are able to sustain their concentration when their attention is engaged by good teaching. For example, the majority of pupils have a very positive and enthusiastic attitude towards English lessons which they find interesting. There are also lessons where behaviour by a minority holds

back their progress. The majority of pupils are confident in talking about their work, readily answer questions and participate fully in discussions. Sixth-form students studying sociology, for example, challenged each other's views about the moral and social implications of suicide, producing a high quality discussion. Similarly in general studies students responded well to a discussion on cultural differences in families and relationships. Year 9 pupils showed very responsible attitudes in discussions on sex and relationships in a lesson on personal and social education. A group of sixth-formers interviewed during the inspection showed an impressive and mature manner in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the school. When these opportunities occur they extend pupils' awareness of the wider community and help them to develop respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Pupils with special educational needs are interested in their work and are fully integrated into the school community.

18. As with attitudes the standard of behaviour within the school also varies. Despite examples of good behaviour the overall standard is dragged down to an unsatisfactory level by poor behaviour, particularly outside the classroom. Behaviour was judged to be good at the previous inspection. The movement of pupils between the East and West block and on stairways results in jostling and pushing and too many pupils arrive at the next lesson in an unsettled state. Younger pupils in particular often feel threatened by these actions. Consequently, teachers have to spend teaching time in some lessons settling the pupils back into a calmer state before commencing the lesson. Incidents of oppressive behaviour do occur, particularly affecting younger pupils. This was also noted at the previous inspection.
19. The instances and number of fixed-term exclusions in the last academic year were high involving 68 pupils who were excluded on more than one occasion. There has been an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions since the previous inspection. There were no permanent exclusions during the last academic year and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. The school undertakes a detailed analysis of the reasons for exclusions. The main reasons include unacceptable behaviour, included fighting, physical assault, defiance to staff, abusive language, poor behaviour on school bus, bullying and theft. Parents are concerned about the extreme behaviour of a disruptive minority in the school as is the school itself.
20. The personal development of pupils is satisfactory overall. They respond well to opportunities to take initiative and show personal responsibility. This was shown in the inspection during an 'awards evening' and in duties undertaken in the library. The school is rightly proud of pupils' attitudes and mature response in supporting and transporting the sick around sites at Lourdes. Sixth-formers respond well to limited but increasing opportunities to help, for example in assisting Year 7 pupils to settle into the school. During lunch hours pupils seize on opportunities to use the learning resources centre and all respond well to the increased opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. There is an enthusiasm for some year councils recently established. Year 9 pupils, for example, have set up a social area and organised a disco to raise funds to develop that facility. Relationships which develop between teachers and pupils in design and technology are excellent.
21. The level of attendance of pupils is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is also in line with national averages. The majority of pupils are punctual in arriving at school at the start of the school day but lateness of pupils is not always challenged including in the sixth form and there are a few persistent latecomers. There is no travelling time built into the timetable for pupils moving between lessons and some lessons start between 10 to 15 minutes late, losing valuable teaching and learning time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. The standard of teaching and quality of pupils' learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Of 176 observations at the inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of observations. Teaching was good or better in 58 per cent of lessons. Twelve lessons were unsatisfactory and one was poor with five of these in physical education. The best teaching was in the sixth form where it was good or better in 73 per cent of lessons. Teaching is good overall in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. In most other subjects teaching is good but satisfactory in music and media studies. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall in physical education despite some examples of good or very good teaching of boys. In science and design and technology teaching is consistently very good in the sixth form.
23. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory in two out of five lessons at Key Stage 4. There is a good blend of new teachers and more experienced staff with a significant number having been appointed in the last two years. This is making it possible to raise standards.
24. The quality of pupils' learning is closely matched to the quality of teaching and is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form.
25. Teaching mostly meets the needs of pupils and students. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Teachers of English have high expectations and in science standards are closely linked to teachers' expectations. Higher attainers are mostly appropriately challenged but there are some lessons in English, mathematics, French and history where this is not so. Science teachers in the sixth form have expectations which take account of the prior attainment of pupils but which also make the kind of demands on pupils which stretch them to reach expected A-level standards. Teachers of GNVQ cope well with students of varying levels of attainment with different levels of challenge built successfully into work. In the sixth form students in economics, sociology and government and politics were effectively challenged and made to think and reason in response to questions.
26. The provision made, and some lack of continuity of teaching, results in the progress of girls in physical education at Key Stage 4 being unsatisfactory. Such factors also affect their interest and motivation in the subject. In physical education good arrangements are made however for talented pupils to progress to regional and national events. The needs of most pupils with English as an additional language are met but at the time of the inspection the planned support for small numbers whose acquisition of English is at an early stage had not materialised. In the meantime individual teachers were innovative in their methods and ideas in partly compensating for this. Visiting instrumental teachers in music make a valuable contribution including extending the skills of higher attainers. In modern foreign languages boys do not do as well as girls at Key Stage 3 and further thought needs to be given to how they can be better involved. In drama the good use of group work and careful allocation of pupils to such groups helps to ensure that all are challenged.

27. Lower attainers benefit from good teaching on the Youth Award programme with pupils developing a range of skills such as map-reading, giving clear instructions, and recording their experiences of community service.
28. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils with special educational needs and manage these needs well especially when helped by skilled support assistants. Teachers are making good use of pupils' revised individual education plans at Key Stage 3, but the same quality plans have yet to be introduced at Key Stage 4 by the recently appointed SENCO. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects.
29. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Standards of reading are good because most subjects provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to read aloud in lessons. Standards of writing vary across the curriculum because there is no consistent policy to guide teachers on how they can help pupils to improve their writing. The emphasis which teachers place on correcting spelling errors also varies too much and as a result a significant minority make frequent errors in the spelling of common words. Standards of numeracy are higher at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4 with pupils in Years 7 to 9 bringing better skills with them from their primary schools. There is a strong emphasis on developing number skills in mathematics and some good examples in other subjects, but there is not a sufficient drive across the school to make best use of teachers' skills across the curriculum. Some pupils with special educational needs receive intensive help to raise their standards in reading and spelling.
30. Teachers show in nearly all lessons that they have good subject knowledge which is well used to support pupils' learning. Teachers of English use such knowledge to ask searching questions. In art, teachers consistently and effectively reinforce the importance of sketchbooks in developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and at times help pupils to progress in their learning by being able to demonstrate clearly what needs to be done. In the sixth form teachers' knowledge and expertise is used to particularly good effect in getting the best out of students. Teachers in design and technology in the sixth form have a particularly good balance of skills which are used to raise standards and creativity amongst students. In a minority of cases the lack of specialist subject knowledge slows down progress as seen in some lessons in physical education, history and geography, but there are also strong features in these subjects. Teachers of GNVQ have the required knowledge of the occupational areas which they teach to develop the vocational skills and understanding of students. In modern foreign languages teachers do not use their linguistic skills enough in lessons and resort to the use of English too easily.
31. Teachers' planning is good. In English this leads to a wide range of activities in lessons. Schemes of work are well used in drama to help planning. In design and technology at Key Stage 3 some weaknesses in planning lead to missed opportunities in getting pupils to reflect on their design ideas. Good planning in history leads to good use of resources and methods as also seen in modern languages in Years 7 and 8 and science in Year 7. Although there are examples of good planning in physical education it is weak overall resulting in a too limited range of experiences for pupils. In GNVQ programmes assignments are well planned with opportunities for students to work at their own pace. A very well planned lesson in personal and social education on issues of smoking created real interest with telling references to the financial implications of the habit.
32. Teaching methods are satisfactory. In English there is a successful emphasis throughout the department on encouraging pupils to read aloud with good expression.

The development of pupils' skills in numeracy is promoted constructively in mathematics by the setting of number tasks and games at the beginning or end of lessons which pupils enjoy. In the best lessons in science pupils enjoy their learning in an atmosphere where learning is fun. There are insufficient lessons in science however where lessons begin in ways which capture and hold pupils' attention and occasions when progress is affected by too narrow a range of teaching methods being used. Pupils approach tasks better in art as a result of the exemplar sheets used by teachers. The guidance provided in design and technology encourages pupils to explore a range of possibilities in finding solutions to problems, however, in some lessons at Key Stage 3 in design and technology too many worksheets are used. A very effective use of short-term objectives in Spanish in Years 8 and 9 helps pupils to make excellent progress. In music much is being done to generate interest and raise standards through using a wider range of activities and tasks in lessons. In the sixth form students in sociology were successfully encouraged to evaluate materials from a range of textbooks in understanding the theory of 'positivism'.

33. The use of computers varies considerably with shortages of resources being the main problem as seen in mathematics. Good use of resources is planned in science, but the lack of use of information and communication technology in most subjects is a weakness. Computers are profitably used in music at Key Stage 3 for the writing of music. It is well used for the teaching of pupils with multi-sensory difficulties. Good use was also seen in the sixth form in science and as an integral part of GNVQ courses.
34. The management of pupils is good but there are instances where teachers have to be on their guard because of the threat of disruption posed by a minority of pupils. This sometimes prevents teachers from showing themselves at their best. Teachers also have to deal with problems which pupils bring with them from outside the classroom where behaviour is unsatisfactory. There are also some examples where teachers do not gain the co-operation of all pupils including in English, mathematics and science. In art the management of pupils is satisfactory but teachers are more successful at Key Stage 3 in getting pupils to concentrate when doing practical work than in listening to instructions and discussing what they have achieved. Where misbehaviour arises in history it is promptly and effectively dealt with so that lessons are not interrupted. The relationships established in design and technology are excellent and in the sixth form there is a highly creative and purposeful feel about lessons.
35. The use of time and resources is good and most lessons proceed at a good pace. In Year 11, pupils make good progress in their coursework in design and technology helped by having clear time limits for the completion of tasks. In science the best lessons are lively and well paced but there are also lessons lacking in these respects. Pace and challenge are also lacking in some lessons in mathematics. Practical activities are safely planned in science and very good technician support makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' practical skills. The use of good resources and accommodation in GNVQ courses help to provide the correct kind of atmosphere for vocational learning. There is good use of visiting speakers in GNVQ courses to establish relevance to the world of work. In government and politics a cartoon representation was well used to make a point on the dilemma facing the government in using a large budgetary surplus. Display material is used particularly well in Spanish to create further interest in the language and its culture.
36. The quality and use of on-going assessment are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. In English there is a good response to helpful marking which was praised by parents at the pre-inspection meeting and by pupils interviewed

at the inspection. There is also regular and careful marking in modern foreign languages and helpful comments in geography. Although marking is regular in science there are insufficient comments to help pupils to raise standards, other than in the sixth form. In art, assessment is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 but GCSE pupils are not sufficiently well informed on how well they are doing in relation to GCSE standards. Assessment systems are improving at Key Stage 3 in design and technology but there are not enough references to National Curriculum levels. Marking is regular and used constructively in history to help pupils progress. Assessment is not yet strong enough in music and therefore makes the setting of targets difficult. Assessment criteria is profitably shared with students on GNVQ courses so that they understand how well they are doing and similarly on the Youth Award programme pupils benefit from being assessed in stages as they go along. Question and answer sessions are used well in history to check if pupils have understood what they have learned.

37. Homework was used satisfactorily during the inspection but there are weaknesses and significant numbers of parents are concerned about this aspect of the school's work. In science for example homework is set but is rarely imaginative and there are instances of incomplete work in books despite reminders from teachers. There is positive use of homework in history.

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

38. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all its pupils and students. The curriculum is mostly well planned to build on pupils' previous experiences and to prepare them for either the world of work or the next stage of education. The curriculum enables pupils to progress satisfactorily in most subjects. There are deficiencies however in the provision for physical education in Year 11 and in information and communication technology at Key Stage 4, neither of which meet statutory requirements. Visiting instrumental teachers make a significant contribution to the broadening of the curriculum.
39. The teaching week at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is just at the 24 hours required but short of the 25 hours recommended nationally. There are some imbalances in the time allocated for subjects between each year particularly at Key Stage 3. There are no specific vocational programmes at Key Stage 4 but GNVQ courses are well established in the sixth form. Together with this the sixth form provides a good range of courses at AS/A-level although numbers attracted are small in most subjects.
40. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good. The impact of a new special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) is beginning to be felt with individual education plans and support utilised more effectively. Teachers are well informed. The use of the Certificate of Achievement and Units of Accreditation at Key Stage 4 meet the needs of lower attainers who need a different kind of motivation and certification of success. There are satisfactory strategies for the teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy and intensive support for selected pupils with special educational needs.
41. When taking into account all extra-curricular activities including overseas visits and subject trips provision is satisfactory overall. Activities include the impressive visits to Lourdes, retreats, combined geography and history visits and modern foreign language visits to France and Spain. Visits to galleries in art add much to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Day-to-day extra-curricular activities however are rather sparse. One of the school's current priorities is to develop extra-curricular activities

further. Musical activities are increasing under the temporary head of music from a low base. An annual production is well received. There is a good range of sporting fixtures and opportunities for higher attainers to progress to regional and national competitions. Subjects such as design and technology offer invaluable support for examination classes after school.

42. The provision of equal access and opportunity is satisfactory. Girls do not have as good a provision as boys in physical education where staff absences affect continuity of teaching and learning. This is also the case in some lessons in health and social care on GNVQ courses. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language are not disadvantaged in their learning, but small numbers whose acquisition is at an early stage were not adequately supported at the time of the inspection, although support was planned. An alternative curriculum for some pupils at Key Stage 4 who are not suited to a conventional curriculum has been well developed in conjunction with further education and employers. Good equality of opportunity is promoted by pupils being able to sit examinations in a variety of languages and have included Chinese, Panjabi, Polish, Russian, Turkish and Italian in recent years.
43. The provision of personal and social education is good. There is a well planned programme of Education and Personal Relationships (EPR) with provision stronger at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Teaching was at least good at the inspection and in one lesson very good.
44. The programme for careers' education is good. It assumes greater importance in Year 9 when pupils make their optional choices and there is a module devoted to careers in pupils' programmes in Year 11. There is access to a good careers library and pupils receive good information from local employers and providers of post-16 education and training. The school has good links with local universities.
45. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies include a regular specific spiritual content and are usually conducted by the head of the year, the chaplain or senior staff. There are appropriate themes, for example 'Remembrance' during the week of the inspection. In registration the form teacher leads the class in prayer. Across the curriculum there are good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs.
46. The school's promotion of moral development is satisfactory. There are some good examples of moral and ethical issues being successfully explored in subjects, including in geography when discussing environmental issues.
47. Provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory but pupils do not make the most of social time outside the classroom. There are good opportunities for pupils to benefit from participation in competitive team games. The introduction of year councils is proving a valuable additional forum for pupils to cultivate social development. There are also good opportunities for group work in most subjects including in drama and media studies.
48. Cultural activities are satisfactory and there are plans to extend this so that each year group can benefit from trips to outside venues. There are numerous examples in subjects for pupils to consider cultures other than their own. This is made possible in geography for example with case studies on Kenya, USA and Japan. Music provides opportunities to explore cultural differences and similarities. The features of the Hispanic culture are explored well in the teaching of Spanish. In government and

politics the American and British electoral systems are compared and contrasted and cultural differences explored.

49. The school has satisfactory links with the local community. Sporting links with local clubs are good. There are extensive links with universities particularly for training for teachers and strong links with the local parishes. There is good liaison with the local police and health service. The University of the First Age adds another dimension. The employers' forum offers good links with the local industry. There are satisfactory links with primary schools but an insufficient sharing of test and assessment results, which the school is planning to address.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and child protection are satisfactory overall. Tutors generally know their pupils well and understand their needs. The pastoral system is effectively managed by an assistant head and through key stage co-ordinators and heads of year. Very effective support is provided by members of the administrative staff. A comprehensive pastoral plan has been developed with good proposals to improve provision further. Many of the areas for development identified for improvement during the inspection are addressed within the pastoral plan. The pastoral team works hard and well to support academic staff and ensure that pupils' development is promoted and monitored effectively. A comprehensive Education and Personal Relationships (EPR) programme covering Key Stage 3 has been developed and resourced. It covers health and sex education together with building an awareness of the need to develop study skills. Staff are well briefed by the EPR co-ordinator but not all take advantage of this to plan well ahead in their teaching and the quality of what pupils receive therefore varies. Pupils in Year 11 have a series of 'off timetable' mornings that cover a range of activities that help prepare them for life after school. These sessions are mainly led by outside speakers. Pupils are well prepared for post-16 and higher education through an effective careers education programme that includes a careers convention within the school, visits to colleges of further education, universities and places of work. Pupils in Year 11 benefit from a mentoring scheme and the setting of targets which has helped in raising standards.
51. A new head of sixth form has already initiated important changes to ensure more regular mentoring of students to monitor their progress. Some students who were struggling in the sixth form have been redirected into employment or training with much support provided. This is helping to avoid students spending a year or two in the sixth form with little to show for their effort in terms of examination successes as happened in some cases in the past.
52. Since the previous inspection progress has been made in the collating of academic data and analysing the results of external examinations. Teachers' competence and commitment to make the best use of such data varies but is improving. The application of this has been mostly at Key Stage 4 but it does provide a valuable base for extending to Key Stage 3 and the sixth form where there is insufficient use of data to measure pupils' and students' progress. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. Marking of work is mostly regular. There are particular benefits where pupils and students are well informed of their progress, for example on GNVQ courses.
53. The education welfare service provides very good support by analysing trends in non-attendance, identifying early on in their school career potential non-attenders and working in partnership with the school to implement effective strategies such as an

alternative curriculum for disaffected pupils in Key Stage 4. Much effective work is undertaken by the education social worker in liaising with parents and undertaking home visits when a concern is expressed by the school.

54. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good with a series of strategies in place if pupils fail to attend if they are on the concern list. This includes phone calls home by administrative staff. Most tutors who have the primary responsibility for promoting good attendance are thorough in monitoring patterns of non-attendance and punctuality. The importance of regular attendance is reinforced by awards for 100 per cent attendance presented at year group assemblies and an annual award for pupils with the most improved attendance. The school has recently introduced a re-integration programme to support pupils returning to school after absences which is a positive step in its inclusion policy.
55. The application of the school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are unsatisfactory. Expectations expressed in policy are not consistently implemented by all teaching staff particularly in monitoring behaviour around the school. The management of pupils in lessons is mostly good and some departments as teams are consistently successful in dealing with issues quickly and effectively to prevent learning being affected. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes towards others are provided in assemblies and the implications of oppressive behaviour are addressed well in some aspects of pupils' personal, social and health education lessons. The sum total of such practices does not measure up however to the kind of consistency and thoroughness required. The training which staff have received on behaviour management is not being used to good enough effect as a result of inconsistencies in application. Although the range of sanctions for unsatisfactory behaviour is appropriate and understood by pupils, what constitutes unsatisfactory behaviour in the minds of pupils varies too much. Poor behaviour outside the classroom brings some problems into lessons and the chances of that kind of behaviour happening around the school are increased by inadequate levels of supervision.
56. Pupils confirm that any incidents of hostile behaviour, when brought to the notice of staff, are usually dealt with immediately and firmly. There are issues of bullying which the school has recognised. Some pupils interviewed related their experiences of some boisterous and inconsiderate behaviour, particularly outside lessons, which they find threatening. There are good records of pupils whose behaviour is a cause for concern and internal exclusion is used effectively where necessary with work being provided to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. All exclusions are carefully monitored by the governing body.
57. Whilst there is a great commitment to the care and protection of pupils and many success stories in supporting pupils in great need, some procedures are not tight enough. In relation to child protection a flow chart on the procedures to be followed has been issued to members of staff, but there has been no staff training on recognising signs of abuse. The child protection officer is aware of the procedures involved but has only recently been appointed and training is now planned.
58. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory overall and much progress has been made since the last inspection. Governors are closely involved in monitoring this. Remaining deficiencies are in the food technology area, in art, and in the carrying out of risk assessments in some areas, for example in design and technology.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

59. The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents is satisfactory. It works hard to involve parents in all aspects of their child's education.
60. The views of parents about the school are mainly positive but there are some important issues. Of 309 responses to the pre-inspection survey of parents there is strong agreement amongst the majority of parents that their child likes school, is making good progress and is expected to work hard. The majority feel that teaching is good. Most feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem. They mostly feel that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible and that the school is well led and managed. Some concerns were expressed by a significant minority about behaviour, the amount of homework pupils received, a lack of information about how their child was progressing, the closeness of the school's relationship with parents, and a lack of extra-curricular activities. Findings of inspectors support most of these views. Inspectors found that behaviour, particularly but not exclusively outside the classroom, is holding the school back. There was much good teaching with strengths clearly outweighing weaknesses but teaching is satisfactory as a whole. The intent of leadership and management to raise standards is strong but there are too many inconsistencies in application of policy which makes management satisfactory in the judgement of inspectors rather than good.
61. A range of school events such as information and consultation evenings as well as social events and masses are well attended by parents. The parents and staff association organises a range of activities that raise funds and support the school. For example, they provide Irish coffee for parents attending the Advent Mass and have a presence at parents' consultation evenings. They recently provided kit for the girls' netball team and donated money to buy equipment for the physical education department. Many parents provide transport for pupils to and from external events such as inter-school football matches. The governing body, staff and pupils appreciate their efforts.
62. The impact of parents' initiatives and involvement on the work of the school is very good. The quality of information provided to parents is satisfactory. Parents receive regular good quality newsletters which keep them well informed of the activities and successes of the school. Consultation meetings provide adequate opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress. Opportunities are missed in formal written reports to parents to spell out clearly what pupils are achieving academically and what they need to do to improve further. The emphasis in reports is too heavily weighted to pupils' attitudes and responses rather than what they can actually do in subjects. The parents of children with special educational needs are appropriately involved with all reviews including annual reviews.
63. Good use was made of pupils' journals to record homework during the inspection and when used in this way they make a valuable contribution to home-school communications and relationships. Information evenings are held at points of transition, such as choosing options in Year 9, preparation for GCSE examinations or preparing for post-16 education. This provides parents with an understanding on how to help and support their children effectively. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.
65. Following the steep decline in test and examination results in 1998 and 1999 there has been a determined and mostly effective effort by leadership and management to raise standards, working in close co-operation with governors. The governing body, with incisive leadership from the chair of governors, is playing an effective and key role in shaping the direction of the school. Statutory requirements are not being met however in the provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 and for physical education in Year 11 and there are still some health and safety deficiencies. Governors are not sufficiently well guided on the required contents of the annual report to parents and there are some notable omissions.
66. Changes and movement of staff mostly initiated by senior managers and governors have enabled the school to make better use of the experience and potential of teachers, whether long serving or new to the school. Standards of teaching observed at the inspection were better overall than at the last inspection but there were weaknesses particularly in physical education which have not been sufficiently addressed, despite positive support from an assistant headteacher. The management of special educational needs is benefiting from a specialist appointment and an improvement in pupils' records. The focus on raising academic standards is firmly rooted in the aim of leadership and management to be better than average compared with other schools and in this respect the targets which it has set itself give the school a clear sense of direction. Management has not succeeded in raising standards in some areas and in particular in physical education.
67. Some very good systems have been implemented at GCSE in setting targets for pupils and in raising standards. The way in which results are broken down into teaching groups helps in analysing the impact made by teaching and other factors on pupils' performance and represents particularly good practice. Such good practice has not been extended to pupils in their earlier years in the school and invaluable data from National Curriculum tests in primary schools and from testing on entry in Year 7 is not used enough. Similarly there is insufficient use of assessment data in the sixth form to predict grades and to measure the value added to students' education by their experiences in post-16 education.
68. Observations of teachers in the classroom have been successfully initiated as part of a learning review policy but despite the good start that process is not sufficiently rigorous or systematic as yet. Appraisal of teaching staff is only partly in place, but is fully in place for support staff where it is used most effectively in developing the skills of a very good team extremely well led by the support staff manager.
69. Leadership and management have achieved considerable success in securing a substantial improvement in accommodation since the last inspection. A major lead responsibility for this has been successfully delegated to the deputy head. The library in particular, heavily criticised at the last inspection, has been transformed into an appropriate learning resources area linked to the ICT network. Amongst many other improvements the major refurbishment of science facilities is providing increased opportunities to raise standards. Several departments are now able to operate more efficiently as a result of teaching being relocated to adjacent rooms. Most of the health and safety issues have been eliminated but some remain in food technology and art. Whilst overall accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively modern foreign languages suffer as some rooms do not have separate entrances and can only

be accessed via other rooms. Physical education would ideally benefit from a sports hall although current facilities are not inadequate, although shabby. Drama and media studies lack the specialist facilities necessary to create the right environment for teaching these subjects. Physical education staff do not have an office and lack such a focal point to help in directing activities. Displays in the school are sparse and unimaginative and there are missed opportunities to celebrate achievement and inspire pupils. Excessive litter in outside areas scars the environment and is too easily accepted.

70. Positive measures taken in relation to staffing and in improving accommodation stand in contrast with the lack of success achieved in the behaviour of pupils, particularly but not exclusively outside the classroom. The lack of respect and consideration which some pupils show for others is at odds with the school's worthy aims encapsulated in its mission statement and based firmly in the school's catholicity. The assistant head in charge of pastoral affairs is giving a positive and pragmatic lead in improving behaviour but is held back by the collective will to take positive, decisive and enduring action not being strong enough at senior management level and consequently across the school as a whole.
71. The tendency to over-elaborate at the expense of swift and decisive action is also seen in the school's development planning. There are too many separate plans which do not culminate sufficiently in a whole-school plan. There is also a diverse range of departmental plans without a common format and too much is left to chance in getting departments to focus on searching questions to raise standards further and in complementing whole-school priorities.
72. The deficit in the budget is seen as a temporary measure to give the sixth form an opportunity to build and establish itself. Small teaching groups in the sixth form bring the pupil:teacher ratio down to below average overall. Total expenditure on teaching staff is average with sufficient numbers and mainly appropriately qualified. The significant increase in hours for support staff since the last inspection has increased efficiency. Despite expenditure on resources for learning increasing since the last inspection there are still some shortages affecting the quality of education in art. Expenditure on special educational needs is equal to the income generated and is currently being well used.
73. The sixth form has been singled out for special attention as the school attempts to improve results, build up numbers and make it financially viable. Some measures are being successful introduced by the new head of sixth form to provide a more distinctive identity for post-16 education and to reach the precise targets to secure its survival set by the governing body. There is a stark realisation that numbers in the sixth form are too small at the moment and that they must increase alongside improved results for the sixth form to survive and for the principles of best value to be seen to be happening. Currently the sixth form does not provide value for money. There are clear targets and timescales for the sixth form to succeed with adequate consultation with the local educational authority on the deficit incurred.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. In order to improve standards the governors and senior management should:

- **Raise standards in mathematics and science by:**
 - ♦ building more effectively on what pupils have already achieved at primary school to set challenging targets to stretch all pupils and improve National Curriculum test results at Key Stage 3;
 - ♦ setting higher targets at GCSE to bring results more in line with achievements in English;
 - ♦ raising teacher expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving;
 - ♦ using a greater variety of teaching methods to involve and inspire pupils;
 - ♦ making better use of assessment to check on individual pupil's performance and to set targets;
 - ♦ having clear departmental plans of action in both subjects to raise standards.
(Paragraphs: 1, 4, 7, 32, 35, 36, 76, 89, 92, 95, 100, 106, 107)

- **Raise standards in physical education by:**
 - ♦ developing more challenging and progressive teaching;
 - ♦ eliminating unsatisfactory teaching;
 - ♦ ensuring that girls have equivalent opportunities to boys in lessons and extra-curricular opportunities;
 - ♦ ensuring that girls' education is not disrupted by lack of continuity of teaching;
 - ♦ ensuring that pupils can no longer opt out of physical education in Year 11;
 - ♦ continuing to press for a sports hall and an improvement in general facilities.
(Paragraphs: 22, 26, 31, 42, 66, 165, 168, 169)

- **Increase numbers in the sixth form to make it financially viable and raise attainment by:**
 - ♦ ensuring that students recruited have the potential to cope with their course successfully and gain the appropriate qualification;
 - ♦ monitoring the progress, application and attendance of students to ensure that value for money is provided;
 - ♦ measuring the additional value added by the sixth form to students' progress and attainment and publicising such information;
 - ♦ building on some improvements observed at the inspection in making the sixth form a more attractive alternative to competing institutions.
(Paragraphs: 14, 51, 52, 67, 72, 73)

- **Improve whole-school and departmental planning by:**
 - ♦ having one whole-school plan rather than a range of separate plans;
 - ♦ identifying a manageable number of priorities;
 - ♦ having a common format for all plans;
 - ♦ establishing an agreed cycle and timetable for submission of plans which are kept to;
 - ♦ ensuring departmental plans always reflect whole-school plans.
(Paragraphs: 71, 83, 96, 97, 110, 120)

- **Improve behaviour by:**
 - ♦ making it much more clear to pupils what is expected and the consequences of breaking rules;
 - ♦ eliminating jostling and pushing particularly in areas of congestion and reducing noise levels when pupils are moving around the school;
 - ♦ increasing levels of supervision in all areas and particularly in areas of congestion;

- ◆ all staff implementing agreed behavioural policies uniformly;
- ◆ management at all levels taking a stronger lead in ensuring school policy is implemented;
- ◆ senior management visiting lessons to check on progress being made;
- ◆ implementing these policies immediately and sustaining them.

(Paragraphs: 18, 34, 55, 56, 60, 70)

- **Meet legal requirements by:**

- ◆ teaching physical education to all students in Year 11 rather than offering it as an option;
- ◆ ensuring that all pupils at Key Stage 4 receive the required teaching of information and communication technology;
- ◆ improving facilities in food technology to meet safety and hygiene requirements, providing a finger guard on a pug mill in art and carrying out risk assessments in design and technology.

(Paragraphs: 11, 38, 58, 65, 127, 142, 146, 169)

75. In addition to the above the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan: invigorating the school by building on current improvements seen in extra-curricular activities in music; improving display in most subjects throughout the school to celebrate the achievement of pupils and students.
(Paragraphs: 41, 69, 120, 161)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	176
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1%	23%	34%	35%	6%	1%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	870	80
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	135	-

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	158	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	29

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	34

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
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
	2000	89	78	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	56 (43)	62 (42)	50 (36)
	Girls	61 (70)	46 (52)	45 (40)
	Total	117 (113)	108 (94)	95 (76)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (63)	65 (53)	57 (43)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (31)	38 (30)	22 (10)
	National	29 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	55 (53)	54 (36)	57 (38)
	Girls	61 (79)	45 (48)	52 (57)
	Total	116 (132)	99 (84)	109 (95)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	68 (75)	60 (48)	66 (53)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (33)	35 (23)	23 (27)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	90	87	177

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	37 (26)	82 (76)	88 (81)
	Girls	43 (41)	77 (80)	79 (90)
	Total	80 (67)	159 (156)	167 (171)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	45.2 (37)	89.7 (87)	95 (96)
	National	49 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	36.4 (35)

per pupil	National	38.7 (38.1)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	14	7	21

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	8.87 (14.5)	9.16 (13.1)	8.95 (13.8)	Nil (1.1)	Nil (3.0)	Nil (1.5)
National	17.7 (17.7)	18.6 (18.1)	18.2 (17.9)	(2.7)	(2.8)	(2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	24 (25)	88.9 (93)
	National		n/a

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	61
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	9
Indian	6
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	829
Any other minority ethnic group	78

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	13	0
Black – African heritage	1	0
Black – other	7	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	114	0
Other minority ethnic groups	17	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	416

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25
Key Stage 4	21.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,409,506
Total expenditure	2,401,830
Expenditure per pupil	2,407
Balance brought forward from previous year	-81,220
Balance carried forward to next year	-73,544

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Number of questionnaires sent out:

956

Number of questionnaires returned:

309

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strong disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	35	54	7	2	2
My child is making good progress in school	34	56	6	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good	19	48	17	5	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	24	50	15	6	5
The teaching is good	21	65	4	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	23	50	17	3	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	42	45	8	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	48	45	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents	21	51	18	2	8
The school is well led and managed	30	48	8	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	30	55	6	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	20	44	15	5	16

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

ENGLISH

76. Standards in National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2000 were above average compared with all schools and well above average for similar schools. A significant feature of the 2000 results and those of recent years was the above average percentage of pupils who attained the higher levels (Level 6 and above). Results have been above average for the last five years, an improvement since the previous inspection. Whereas girls' results are similar to those of girls nationally, boys' results have been consistently above the national average for boys. These results are better than the same pupils achieve in mathematics and science.
77. Standards in GCSE results in English language were above average in 2000 in comparison with all schools. Standards in English literature, where the school enters a higher proportion of pupils for the examination than that found nationally, were average. In both subjects the proportion of pupils attaining the highest A* and A grades was below average. Girls performed significantly better than boys in English literature, but in English language boys' results were above the average for boys nationally. GCSE results in 2000 and in recent years are below the standards at the time of the previous inspection but are significantly better than those attained by the same pupils in most other subjects.
78. A-level results in 2000 in English language were average for the proportion of students passing the examination at grades A–E, but well below the average for those attaining the higher A or B grades. The number of students entered for English literature at A-level in 2000 was too small to make any valid national comparisons. Of the four students entered two were successful in the D–E category. A-level results in both subjects have declined over the last three years.
79. Pupils currently in Key Stage 3 have made good progress in their time at the school so that standards presently attained by the majority at the end of Year 9 are above average. Improved planning of lessons together with a wide range of successful teaching methods and very positive attitudes amongst pupils means that a higher than average proportion of pupils are reaching and exceeding the required standard. The majority of pupils speak confidently and fluently about their work and can vary their speech in a variety of different situations because teachers' planning ensures a wide range of activities in which these skills can be practised. In a Year 9 class the teacher's dramatic reading of the class novel held the pupils enthralled and led directly to high quality discussion involving pupils. There are some situations however where pupils, including higher attainers, do not listen attentively to the opinions of others. Reading is good at all levels. Teachers encourage pupils to read aloud with good expression and use their own knowledge of the subject to ask searching questions to test pupils' understanding. Higher attaining pupils are not making sufficient progress in extending their vocabulary or in seeking deeper meanings in their reading consistently across all lessons although there are occasions when this is done well. For example in a Year 7 lesson pupils thoroughly enjoyed an excellent choice of book for class reading and their enthusiasm enabled them to explore the meanings of very difficult words. Standards of writing are not consistent. Higher attaining pupils write very well in good sentences with accurate spelling. The skills needed for sustained good writing are not taught frequently enough. The appropriate use of punctuation, for example, is a weakness in the writing

of a significant minority of pupils.

80. Pupils make satisfactory progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 so that the standards currently being attained by the majority at the end of Year 11 are mostly above average. This is partly because boys are above average in English language and girls' standards are well above average in English literature. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The positive attitudes amongst pupils and the good relationships with teachers established in Key Stage 3 are carried over into Key Stage 4 so that the large majority of pupils are well motivated to succeed and concentrate well in lessons. Oral work is above average. Listening skills improve and by the end of the key stage pupils speak perceptively about the texts studied with a good knowledge of literary terms. Teachers have high expectations of the quality of discussions. This was seen most effectively in a Year 11 lesson where the high quality of pupils' discussions led to a very good interpretation of the relationship between characters in a short story. Teachers' good subject knowledge and planning ensures that all lessons are based on the careful reading of demanding texts so that pupils' reading skills are above average. However, in some classes in both Year 10 and Year 11 a minority of pupils do not cooperate with their teachers and present unnecessary difficulties, which some teachers find difficulty in managing. These pupils make poor progress both in lessons and in the GCSE course. The quality of pupils' writing is variable. Higher attaining pupils write in a mature style with very good technical accuracy. Average pupils write well but their knowledge of words limits their capacity to interpret texts on deeper levels. Below average pupils make too many basic errors of spelling and sentence construction. The quality of planning and the sharing of good teaching methods are better at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4.
81. In the sixth form students make satisfactory progress because teachers plan the work carefully to match their previous levels of achievement. Although current standards are below average because very few students are working towards higher grades, the majority are at least in line to pass the examinations. Discussion work is generally good although many students lack elementary knowledge and this hampers their progress. In a lesson based on comparing the attitudes of two writers towards the same topic the students' uncertainty about defining and spelling common literary terms limited the quality of their work. Teachers work hard to overcome these deficiencies, sometimes by providing their own 'model answers', but the quality of written work is rarely better than average. A minority of students, however, do produce good analytical writing and show an above average knowledge of the subject.
82. The quality of teaching is a significant factor in the maintenance of above average standards and achievements in the sixth form. The teaching seen was never less than satisfactory and is good overall. There is a higher proportion of very good teaching than at the time of the previous inspection. There is a higher quality of planning and a greater variety of methods in Key Stage 3 teaching. Pupils and students, with minor exceptions, have a high regard for their teachers which is shown by their positive attitudes and willingness to respond to the helpful marking of their work. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, the work is challenging and enjoyable, and all pupils are encouraged to participate. Encouragement is given to pupils to use information and communication technology in drafting and presenting their work. These are all improvements since the previous inspection.
83. The day-to-day management of the department is good. Teachers have started to monitor each others' lessons and there is now a greater realisation of the benefits which this brings in helping to maintain standards, in creating a strong sense of teamwork and in the sharing of good practice, especially at Key Stage 3. Longer-term

planning has weaknesses with insufficient attention paid to improving teaching and learning, especially at Key Stage 4, in order to build on the good base already established.

Standards of literacy across the curriculum

84. Standards are above average but there are significant variations between the different strands of literacy. Pupils' speaking skills are good. The majority of pupils speak confidently and fluently about their work. Pupils use the specialist vocabulary of art, history and geography well. Teachers in modern foreign languages provide pupils with good opportunities to practise speaking and pupils listen well. Listening is less good in many other subjects. In art pupils work well in practical activities but do not concentrate enough when listening to instructions. Standards of reading are good because most subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to read aloud in lessons. The library is well stocked with a good range of fiction but it is largely only pupils in Years 7 and 8 who borrow books to read for pleasure. Standards of writing vary across the curriculum and are satisfactory overall. Currently, the school does not have a policy for the teaching of writing which enables each subject to conform to the requirements of the National Curriculum in this regard. In geography pupils are given good guidance in how to structure their written work but this good practice is not followed by other subjects. Standards are therefore inconsistently reinforced. As a consequence many teachers are unsure of how they can help pupils to improve their writing. In science, whilst key words are recorded in exercise books, insufficient use is made of technical vocabulary when explaining the results of experiments.
85. The spelling and meaning of technical words related to the subject are taught well in history and spelling mistakes are corrected in mathematics and information and communication technology. Higher attaining pupils in most subjects write with good spelling in properly constructed and punctuated paragraphs. However, the lack of consistent teaching and marking results in frequent errors in the spelling of common words and unsatisfactory use of correct punctuation in the writing of a significant minority of pupils and students in all subjects.

Drama and performing arts

86. GCSE results in drama were below average in 2000. They were higher in 1999, but still below average despite 59 per cent of candidates being successful at grades A*–C. There were no entries for performing arts at A-level in 2000, and it is not running currently, but in 1999 all five candidates were successful at grades A–E, with four attaining a grade C.
87. Although attainment is below average overall at Key Stage 4 with the wide range of pupils attracted to the course pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their previous knowledge and skills. The standards reached by higher attainers in the current Year 11 group are at least average. This was shown by their competence in acting out a scripted scene set in an American school where pupils identified themselves successfully with roles allocated including the headteacher and a recalcitrant pupil. They responded sensitively to their own work and that of others. Teaching in drama enables pupils of varying levels of attainment to progress satisfactorily. Pupils are arranged carefully into groups with each group allocated different tasks to challenge higher, average and lower attainers. In a lesson observed some concentrated on their coursework and others watched a video made in the previous lesson. In the latter exercise pupils learned from their mistakes graphically portrayed by the video and the weaknesses of not having a good sound track were

clearly demonstrated. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to co-operate in creating drama and benefit from the social development which the subject offers through working in groups. Overall attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory.

88. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning are also satisfactory and appropriate schemes of work are well used in helping teachers plan their work. The subject is well led and this helps to compensate for the lack of suitable equipment and a drama studio which could provide a focal point and create a more professional atmosphere. The department makes a good contribution to extra-curricular activities but specialist facilities would help in promoting more ongoing activities throughout the year.

MATHEMATICS

89. In 2000, results in National Curriculum test results for 14-year-olds were average in mathematics compared with all schools and similar schools. The 2000 results showed pupils with mainly average standards on entry to the school making satisfactory progress. Results have not been consistent and were below average in 1999 compared with all schools and similar schools. Results in 1999 and 2000 were not as good as the same pupils achieved in English.
90. GCSE results were average overall in 2000 at grades A–C but girls' results were below average with 38 per cent successful at these grades compared with 50 per cent for girls nationally. GCSE results have not been consistent and in 1999 were below average with girls attaining more highly than boys. A* and A grades have been below average.
91. The number of students studying mathematics at A-level is small and never more than six in any one of the past five years. With such small numbers comparison with the national averages has little significance. Results were better in 1999 than 2000. In 1999 three out of the four candidates were successful at grades A–E with one achieving an A grade. In 2000 only one of three candidates was successful but with the lowest pass grade E. All three underachieved in relation to their previous GCSE results and did better in their other A-level subjects than in mathematics.
92. Standards of work seen at the inspection at the end of Key Stage 3 were average and similar to the 2000 test results, rather than the below average results of 1999. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs, but there are variations. Currently pupils in Year 7 are not being stretched and challenged enough in mixed ability classes where pupils' competencies range from those having difficulty with single digit arithmetic to those able to sum a series or give the definition of an obtuse angle. Insufficient regard is paid to pupils' attainment on entry to the school and the fact that the majority of pupils currently in Year 7 achieved above average results in national tests in primary school at the age of eleven. From Year 8 onwards pupils make better progress when taught in groups based mainly on previous attainment and where there is a good emphasis on developing the numeracy skills of all. Pupils' skills in collecting and displaying data and in investigative work are also extended in Year 8 but writing to explain patterns or hypotheses is limited. In Year 9 higher attaining pupils display particularly good skills in mental arithmetic and in handling fractions, decimal numbers and percentages. Their work with algebraic expressions and equations is also good although lower attaining pupils lack confidence in solving equations.
93. At the end of Key Stage 4 standards seen at the inspection were average with the

majority making satisfactory progress. There is a good development of investigative work through Years 10 and 11 but some pupils still lack a sufficiently systematic approach to problem solving. Higher attainers write at greater length to describe their work but there is little evidence of appropriate use of information and communication technology in any of this work. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy skills further in Year 10 but some pupils even in the higher sets have limited skills in mental arithmetic, unlike Year 9. Higher attainers can handle algebraic expressions and equations, but in work with quadratic brackets a number of pupils showed only limited understanding and confidence. By Year 11 most pupils can work with area and perimeter for a range of shapes, construct triangles and use the basic trigonometric functions.

94. In the sixth form the standard of work is closer to A-level results achieved prior to 2000 where most attained an A-E grade. In many cases students' achievements are good in relation to their previous attainment. The work seen indicates that the department is making satisfactory provision for those students allowed to progress to A-level with minimal entry qualifications. In pure mathematics students can work with the binomial expansion but have limited confidence in dealing with complex algebraic expressions. In applied mathematics students showed a good understanding of vectors and in statistics an equally good understanding of basic theory which enables them to work successfully with sample means and index values based on weighted averages. Most students do not, however, explain their work with confidence.
95. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with examples of good or better teaching. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 4, but there is still a lack of pace and challenge in some lessons, including for higher attainers. Teachers have secure knowledge and a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils with special educational needs and use these to set appropriate challenges and to enable satisfactory progress to be made. Relationships in the classroom are good and in most classes pupils are keen to participate in answering questions or explaining their ideas. In some lessons pupils have an indifferent attitude to learning but good classroom management ensures that satisfactory learning still takes place. In the best lessons pupils' attitudes to learning are well used to ensure that effective learning takes place. In a Year 9 lesson working on the conversion of fractions and decimals to percentages the wholehearted involvement of the class in the initial development of the work resulted in good independent learning throughout the lesson. In a Year 10 class above average attainers were engaged in an excellent and challenging discussion on the names and definitions of trigonometric functions which contributed directly to some good problem solving later in the lesson. Arrival at lessons is not prompt and many lessons start between five and ten minutes late, losing valuable teaching and learning time. In the sixth form the small student groups lead inevitably to a more tutorial style of teaching. Whilst this provides an extremely supportive environment it is more difficult to provide the kind of challenge and exchange of ideas which it is easier to achieve in larger groups.
96. The department is well managed on a day-to-day basis, but there are weaknesses in longer-term planning, which was also identified at the last inspection. The departmental development plan does not identify a clear focus for raising the quality of teaching and learning. There is insufficient use of pupils' results from primary school at the age of eleven, and from the school's testing on entry, to set targets for pupils to achieve by the age of 14. Target setting was also an issue at the last inspection. Schemes of work do not identify how information and communication technology can be exploited in the teaching of mathematics and do not to give clearer guidance on how pupils might be challenged to achieve higher standards at both Key Stages 3 and 4. General resources

are satisfactory but the provision of appropriate information and communication technology to support teaching in the classroom is inadequate.

97. Since the last inspection standards have remained mostly average but test and examination results vary too much. In some years results have fallen to below average in national tests and GCSE despite most pupils being of average attainment on entry to the school. Girls underachieved at GCSE in 2000 as did a small number of students at A-level. Better development planning and better use of assessment data to set targets remain key issues in raising standards.

Standards of numeracy across the curriculum

98. Standards of numeracy and mental arithmetic are satisfactory and often good in Key Stage 3 where pupils have benefited from the numeracy project whilst at primary school. The mathematics department has a strong emphasis on promoting number skills whenever possible in lessons in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Lessons are often planned to begin or end with a short number puzzle or number game and these are popular with pupils. Pupils are taught to estimate orders of magnitude of an expected answer and to check the result from their calculator against this. Many can work without a calculator to a considerable extent. The school has yet to establish a whole-school policy for numeracy and the evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other subject areas is variable.
99. The development of number skills is an integral part of work in science but opportunities to practice these are limited. The work is generally good with pupils developing sophisticated measuring skills by the end of Key Stage 4. Pupils' ability to represent data graphically, find lines of best fit and work with formulae and equations is also well developed. At A-level students make good use of their mathematical skills as they grapple with more complex equations and models on their course. In government and politics good use is made of data in various forms, for example to analyse election outcomes. There is good promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology with most lessons involving measuring and calculating and work in three-dimensional design requiring a good understanding of shape and space. In geography pupils collect and record data and use bar charts and graphs to demonstrate relationships. Similarly in history graphs are used well in the study of production in the coal industry. Calculation of price, work with currency and travel timetables are features of modern foreign languages. In physical education pupils can apply their knowledge learned in mathematics in marking out playing areas using rectangles and circles.

SCIENCE

100. In 2000, results in National Curriculum test results for 14-year-olds were almost in line with the national average compared with all schools and an improvement on the below average results of 1999. Compared with similar schools results were below average in 2000. Results in science have been weaker than those in English and mathematics with the same pupils attaining much higher results in English. Girls' and boys' results have been similar.
101. GCSE results in 2000 were below average with 43 per cent achieving A-C grades compared with the national average of 47 per cent. The 2000 results were a considerable improvement on 1999 when A-C grades were 13 per cent below the national average. Boys' and girls' results were similar in 2000 with boys improving notably from 1999.

102. Only small numbers study A-level science which makes national comparisons of results difficult. In 2000 the three subjects of biology, physics and chemistry accounted for only seven students in total but all were successful in attaining A–E grades, mostly in the C–D range. Results in 1999 were not as good with four of the 15 candidates being ungraded. The most consistent results have been in biology with all candidates since 1997 successful at A–E grades.
103. Current attainment by the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 is average. Teachers have very good understanding of the information they need to teach and practical activities are safely planned with help from very good quality technical support. This leads to good development of practical skills in all pupils. In Year 7, pupils carefully managed their practical activity using the Bunsen burner for the first time. Although by the end of Year 9 a large proportion of pupils can carry out experiments showing their understandings of predictions based on scientific knowledge and fair tests, the records which they keep are often too brief and often limited to tables of results rather than any kind of substantial analysis.
104. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is near to average and confirms the upward trend in standards indicated by the 2000 GCSE results. In Year 10 pupils were well able to carry out an investigation on what might change the speed at which sugar dissolves. At the end of Year 11 a small minority of higher attaining pupils can identify sources of error and extend their conclusions from close analysis of results. Throughout the 11–16 age range however results are not sufficiently analysed for detailed conclusions to be made. Opportunities for pupils to understand experimental method have not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.
105. With small numbers standards in the sixth form are average. In the sixth form students are much more skilful at analysing data and justifying conclusions and respond well to the expectations placed on them by very good teaching. Students in Year 12 have developed good practical techniques for accurate volumetric analysis necessary for studying quantitative chemistry. A Year 12 student, for example, when studying metabolism, ably investigated what effect the concentration of hydrogen peroxide had upon the rate at which it was broken down to water and oxygen by an enzyme. She methodically followed her plan and quickly spotted where modifications were necessary. Small numbers in classes in the sixth form however make it difficult to create the kind of atmosphere where there is an interchange of ideas and where students are prepared to question and debate.
106. The overall quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form where teacher's knowledge and expertise are used to particularly good effect. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only a very small proportion of lessons. Where teaching is good or better lessons are lively, well planned and briskly paced but there are weak features in some lessons in these respects. There are also occasions when opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas and to suggest and test their own hypotheses are constrained by a narrow range of teaching methods. Progress is sometimes hampered by time spent in copying methods from worksheets. The best teaching makes learning science fun but not enough lessons begin in ways that capture pupils' imagination and insufficient time is left at the end for thinking about what has been learned.
107. Standards reached are closely linked to teachers' expectations and their ability to make lessons interesting. Pupils studying the Certificate of Achievement course in Year 11 steadfastly responded to a test about forces and made good progress because of their

teacher's high expectations. Similarly a Year 7 class knew what to strive for in learning about new apparatus as the objectives were made clear at the beginning of the lesson. Year 11 pupils understood complicated reasons why plant shoots bend towards a light source because of their teacher's planning and resultant good illustrations of ideas about growth. There are examples however of the highest attainers not being sufficiently and rigorously challenged. Most teachers are not sufficiently adept at providing a series of progressively challenging activities in a lesson. There are good examples of the teaching of scientific vocabulary where key words are listed in class books but insufficient use is made of technical vocabulary when pupils explain their conclusions in experimental work. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils with special educational needs who make good progress when helped by skilled support assistants, for instance, in preparing for a test about forces or recording observations during experiments. Schemes of work have opportunities built in to utilise information and communication technology resources available including the use of CD-Roms to research projects.

108. Although rarely imaginative in extending pupils' learning, most teachers regularly set homework but there are notable instances of incomplete work in classbooks and several reminders about missing homework from teachers. Most teachers mark work regularly, but rarely focus upon key learning points and make comments which sharply raise standards. There are also instances of over-generous marking giving imprecise messages about standards as seen in class books throughout the age range.
109. The best teaching gives pupils clear indications about how well they are progressing, checks that comments are acted upon and encourages pupils to pass comments back about their understanding or misconceptions. This more often happens with sixth-form work. The management of pupils is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4 and excellent in the sixth form. Where there is weak management of behaviour pupils do not clearly understand the tasks set or complete work to a satisfactory standard.
110. Recent changes in staffing have had positive effects upon the management of the department and benefits can already be identified with an upward trend in standards. Measures already taken have resulted in teachers and pupils being much clearer on what is expected in national assessments and tests. The head of department has an energetic approach and is quickly developing a clear vision focused upon improving standards but, as yet, rigorous procedures for monitoring teaching and learning through classroom observations and through the scrutiny of pupils' work are not in place. There is also an insufficient sharing of good practice in the planning of lessons. The departmental development plan is not sharp enough in identifying ways of raising standards further.

ART AND DESIGN

111. GCSE results in 2000 were well above average and were an improvement on the results of 1999 which were a little below average. In 2000 boys did significantly better than in earlier years and narrowed the gap between them and girls.
112. The number of students doing A-level is too small to make meaningful national comparisons. In 1999 the only student entered gained a grade E and of two candidates in 2000 one was successful at the top A grade.
113. Standards seen at the inspection were average at the end of Key Stage 3. Girls do better than boys but not markedly so. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately and make satisfactory progress. Standards in GCSE were a little above

average in Year 10 and average in Year 11 and average in the sixth form. Standards at Key Stage 3 are similar to those at the time of the last inspection and have improved at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

114. A consistently good feature of the work of all pupils is the way in which the use of media is combined in creative ways. For example in a Year 8 lesson on line, pattern and texture pupils identify and select images from photographs and magazines with strong textural qualities. Pupils arranged these into compositions and emphasised textural qualities by linking them with drawn texture. In the sixth form the standard of work is closer to A-level results achieved prior to 2000 where most attained an A–E grade. In many cases students' achievements are good in relation to their previous attainment. The work seen indicates that the department is making satisfactory provision for those students allowed to progress to A-level with minimal entry qualifications.
115. At Key Stage 4 pupils use sketchbooks well to explore and develop ideas and themes. Again the emphasis is upon creative combinations of media to produce exciting surfaces and textures. Pupils working on their mock GCSE examination have whole sketchbooks profitably dedicated to one theme such as jungles. Here overlapping colour and texture are used well to evoke the sensation of jungles. The confidence which pupils develop in the use of media provides a sound basis for study in the sixth form. The sketchbook of one student showed a particularly sensitive handling of media to exploit the textural and structural qualities of fish in capturing an undersea world. Large paintings based on research strongly emphasise the textural qualities of the chosen media.
116. All pupils are less good at making sustained observation drawings. For example observation drawing completed for homework at Key Stage 3 is often superficial. The use of line is insensitive with tone used to colour shape rather than describe form. At Key Stage 4 the seductive textural qualities found, particularly in sketchbooks, often mask poor observation drawings, which fail to investigate the essential qualities found in the objects being studied. In the sixth form standards of drawing are better but not as good as other aspects of students' work.
117. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is good overall. Teachers, all specialists in their subject, use their knowledge and understanding well to raise standards. In a Year 7 class pupils making flower drawings were stimulated by an example done by their teacher. Similarly a teacher of a Year 8 group encouraged pupils in their homework set by demonstrating how to go about the task. There is also a shared methodology within the department which results in a strong emphasis on the quality of work in pupils' sketchbooks and the importance of preparatory work. Teachers prepare exemplar sheets well to help pupils see how best they might approach a task.
118. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory and teachers talk to pupils about their progress and frequently suggest ways in which their work may improve. At Key Stage 3 the use of formal assessment procedures across the department are underdeveloped and pupils do not feel well informed about how well they are doing over time. Also the procedures for making assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 are not rigorous enough. Assessment at Key Stage 4 is better, but many pupils have only a vague understanding of how well they are doing in relation to the requirements of GCSE. The lack of use of information and communication technology is a weakness although steps have been taken to identify how this technology might be used.

119. The attitude pupils have to learning is mostly satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but many lessons at this stage have a common weakness. Pupils work well whilst doing practical work but when asked to listen to instruction or to discuss an aspect of their work they are restless and inattentive. This interrupts the flow of lessons and learning and attainment are held back. The attitudes and self-motivation of pupils and students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are good with many showing increasing self-reliance and independence.
120. The use of visits to art galleries to extend learning at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are a strength. However, there is a lack of display of artwork in the public areas of the school to contribute to the wider cultural development of pupils. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection but the amount of money allocated to the department for resources is well below average and paint is scrappy, poorly stored and not easily accessible. The range of materials available is limited with two-dimensional work dominating the curriculum. The department is conscious of the need to develop safe working practices and simple but essential things like soap and paper towels are not routinely provided for pupils. The pug mill used for the preparation of clay has no finger guard and should not be used in this condition. Day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory but longer-term planning is weak. The current plan does not focus enough on real issues for development which are achievable, measurable and which could raise standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. GCSE results recovered strongly from below average results in 1999 to above average in 2000. There were good performances at grades A*-C in most design and technology subjects, especially in textiles. Although results were below average in food technology, the school's analysis shows that the pupils who took this subject generally did better in this exam than the same pupils achieved in their other subjects. The most notable improvement in 2000 was in the performance of boys who achieved above average results compared with boys nationally. At A-level, in graphics, pass rates have been good with no students attaining below an E grade in the last three years. In design and technology at A-level, all passed in 1998 and 1999, but only two out of four students in 2000. There have, however, been no passes at the higher grades A-B over the last three years.
122. Currently standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below average. This judgement corresponds with teacher assessments of performance at the end of this key stage. There has been a decline in standards across Key Stage 3 since the last inspection. Departmental management is taking steps to rectify this. Weaknesses centre on pupils' development of designs. Pupils' graphic communication skills are weak as shown in their portfolios where drawings are poorly annotated, and few reasons are offered for their choices of designs. Too much work is incomplete, and evaluations of designs and products lack depth. Pupils are better at the practical completion of tasks where they work with speed and some accuracy in making products. Textiles products are particularly vibrant and colourful but there are weaknesses in practical capability as pupils approach the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils in Year 9 have limited understanding about methods of cutting, shaping and joining wood.
123. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils improve considerably to reach above average standards. The quality of presentation and annotation of work improves dramatically at this key stage. Standards improve as a result of more careful management of coursework. The proportion of pupils now entered for the GCSE exam is above average and many who do not take GCSE follow a Certificate of Achievement course.

There is a much more measured approach to pupils' design work within the context of GCSE examination criteria. Basic knowledge and skills are secured early on in Year 10, and pupils by Year 11 think broadly about solutions to design problems. While drawing skills are good, some weaknesses remain in the clarity with which pupils explain how their design ideas have developed, and how their design choices have been influenced by their research.

124. In the sixth form, standards are above average and a significant proportion of students' work is of a very high standard. Design work in both graphics and design and technology courses is exciting and highly creative. Students are confident in their ability to make the products which they have designed in a wide range of media. Recent results at A-level have not been as high as they were at the last inspection, but the work of current students shows that standards are returning towards that high level.
125. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen at the inspection. Overall, teaching and learning are good and at Key Stage 3 very good. Classes are very well managed and very good methods are used to achieve significant improvements in knowledge, understanding and skills even in a single lesson. Weaknesses at Key Stage 3 lie in teachers' planning with opportunities lost to get pupils to reflect on design ideas and to offer better evaluations of their work. In some units of work too many worksheets are used which are poorly completed with rather brief responses. Pupils in Year 10 build on their basic skills, for example in drawing and fabric design, very effectively. They work hard with high quality guidance from teachers whose expectations are high. Some work set does not take enough account of the slower speed at which lower attainers work and learn. In Year 11, pupils make good progress in coursework, and benefit from clear timescales for completion of each stage with good guidance from teachers. Additional sessions after school also help pupils to meet deadlines.
126. In the sixth form teaching and learning are very good where there is a highly creative and purposeful feel about the design lessons in both graphics and design and technology. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, and students benefit from close guidance from a teaching team that has a particularly good balance of skills in their subjects. This guidance is not restrictive, but rather encourages students to explore a large range of possibilities in their search for a solution. Across all stages, teachers use very effective diagrams on black or whiteboards and good examples of products or materials to clarify some difficult concepts for pupils.
127. The system for assessing pupils' work at Key Stage 3 and recording these assessments has recently been improved, but teachers do not all make sufficient reference to National Curriculum levels in planning their work. Most of the accommodation is effective and stimulating, but the food technology area is dilapidated with health and safety hazards making access to utensils and materials difficult. Risk assessments are not available for the current work of the subject as they should be. Learning resources are adequate and boosted by considerable self-help initiatives by the teachers. Work in computer aided design and manufacture and computer control aspects of the subject, which teachers have worked very hard to develop, are held back by weaknesses in the provision of hardware and software. The subject is well led and managed and the quality of teaching and learning are monitored effectively. As a consequence appropriate remedies have been set in place to address below average standards at Key Stage 3 and the better completion of GCSE coursework.

GEOGRAPHY

128. The proportion of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*–C has improved steadily over the last three years and in 2000 the percentage was above the national average. In 2000 results at A*/A and the average points score per pupil were above average. Although the number of girls taking the examination has been low in recent years they have attained at a higher level than the boys. There have been no A-level candidates in the last two years. In 1997 and 1998 results at both higher grades A–B and overall grades A–E were well below average.
129. The current attainment of pupils in Year 9 at the end of Key Stage 3 is above national expectations. This is also an improvement compared to the last inspection. Higher attaining pupils can compile accurate diagrams, maps and graphs, using them well with extended writing in enquiry work. They display good understanding of geographical processes and the links between physical and human aspects of the subject. These qualities were illustrated in lessons on the Maasai in Kenya and on the causes and consequences of tectonic movements. Most pupils can extract information from texts, computer generated information and other resource materials. Some pupils find the retention of factual information over time difficult. Most pupils, but particularly the higher attainers, are able to carry out enquiry tasks when given the opportunity. Some of these students are able to make perceptive contributions, for example Year 9 pupils in a lesson on the causes and consequences of tectonic action.
130. Overall attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above the national average. This represents a marked improvement since the last inspection. Higher attaining pupils produce some good coursework. Skills of collecting, analysing, evaluating and representing data are well developed. This was seen in coursework on the urban structure of Huddersfield. In a lesson on farming systems, pupils showed a good appreciation of modern methods and costings in both advanced and less economically developed countries. Most pupils are able to produce accurate annotated diagrams to depict glacial landforms. Some lower attaining pupils however have problems writing accurately. Speaking and reading are generally at a higher level than writing.
131. The attainment of the small number of students on the A-level course is generally in line with course requirements to achieve an A–E grade. Students are diligent in their approach but their higher order analytical and evaluative skills are weak. In a lesson on world climate students were, however, prepared to offer satisfactory comments on the El Nino phenomena. In other lessons background knowledge and skills tended to be sketchy, as for example on the monsoon climate in India.
132. The quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory and is good overall. There has been an overall improvement in teaching since the last inspection. The specialist teachers in the department have good subject knowledge, although this is less true among those non-specialist teachers who are deployed in Years 7 to 9. Where teaching is good or very good the setting of clear objectives and recapitulation of recent work at the beginning of lessons assists pupils to recall and build upon earlier learning and to make good progress in knowledge and understanding. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenging questions, a variety of approaches and the sensible allocation of time to different activities. These qualities were well illustrated in lessons on farming in Year 10 and on the destructive nature of tectonic movements of the earth's crust in Year 9. There is still some over-directed teaching which results in less independent learning and understanding. This was mentioned in the last report.
133. When pupils are given opportunities to organise their own learning, as in enquiry work in Year 9 and in GCSE coursework, they show initiative and an ability to use

geographical methods. In the less than satisfactory lessons pace and challenge are lacking and where combined with weaker classroom management many pupils underachieve. Even in some satisfactory lessons higher attainers are not rigorously challenged. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop and use their computer skills in learning this subject. One good example was seen with Year 8 using prepared spreadsheets to make graphs on different indicators of development across a number of countries. In some lessons taught by non-specialists explanations and details associated with processes are not clear and this causes confusion. There is also over reliance on one textbook. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. In most cases helpful comments are used to help pupils improve the quality of their work but there are inconsistencies and marking is not monitored enough to ensure greater uniformity.

134. Good improvements have taken place over the last two years and the department is well led. There is however an insufficient sharing of good practice and appropriate professional development to improve the quality of teaching of non-specialist staff.

HISTORY

135. GCSE results in 2000 were well above average including eight candidates attaining the top A* grades. This was an improvement on the average results of 1999. There were no A-level candidates in 2000 but the only two students in 1999 were successful at grades A–E.
136. Standards seen at the inspection were above national expectations at Key Stage 3. The majority of pupils have a good historical knowledge and understanding of the periods studied. They are able to involve themselves in historical enquiry at the expected level and organise their information well. In a Year 7 lesson pupils developed a good understanding of Roman life by examining the evidence presented on Pompeii and then began to explore their ideas and interpretation further by producing a travel guide for the town. By the end of Year 9 pupils can use evidence in much greater depth as shown in their study of living conditions in the nineteenth century and can place a sequence of events studied in chronological order. The majority of pupils are also able to present information in a variety of forms, for example in the use of graphs in their study of production in the coal industry. As pupils progress through Key Stage 3 they show a good appreciation of how bias can lead to different accounts of the same event. This was helped in one lesson by opportunities to examine translations of German newspapers on the First World War and compare them with accounts in British newspapers on the same event. Pupils with special educational needs make the similarly good progress in working towards targets laid down in individual education plans.
137. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is mostly above average. Pupils show equal confidence when working with both primary and secondary source materials and in their understanding of developments over time, as seen when studying the history of medicine and how women became involved in the profession. Standards have improved at GCSE as a result of the thoroughness of planning by teachers. A role-play re-enacting the Battle of Hastings was a good example of this enabling pupils to make significant gains in their learning. Teachers are enthusiastic in getting the best out of their pupils and establish good relationships in doing so.

138. The standards in the sixth form are average with some pupils exhibiting a willingness to research a chosen topic and then contribute successfully in a class discussion. Students are rather teacher dependent and although this is providing a solid base for their progress it is also limiting in some ways. In a Year 12 lesson on the problems facing Edward IV on his accession the quality of teaching and guidance was the key to students making good progress. In a Year 13 lesson however on the Italian Wars, students showed little evidence of having read around the subject successfully, and this affected the contribution they could make to the session.
139. The quality of teaching is good overall but there were few lessons at Key Stage 3 where teaching was unsatisfactory. An example of excellent teaching enabled pupils in Year 8 to make significant gains in their learning when re-enacting the Battle of Hastings. In most lessons planning is good resulting in the use of a range of methods and resources. There are isolated examples of lack of clarity and purpose in planning and pupils subsequently not being kept on task. Video material is used well and selectively to illustrate and reinforce points. Teachers mostly have a very good command of their subject and use that to set high expectations for their pupils. Tasks are mostly well matched to the needs of all pupils and only occasionally in lessons at Key Stage 3 were higher attaining pupils not challenged sufficiently. In a Year 7 lesson on the Roman Army pupils with special educational needs made good progress influenced by purposeful and enthusiastic teaching. Question and answer sessions are well used to check that previous work has been learned, such as in a Year 7 lesson on life in Britain before the Romans. Homework makes a positive contribution to standards achieved and marking is regular with constructive comments which pupils find valuable. Pupils respond well to the firm demands placed on them and behaviour in the classroom is generally good. Any minor incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Experienced teachers use methods which they know will work but such skills are not supplemented sufficiently by the use of ICT to add a further dimension to both teaching and learning.
140. The department is well led, with a strong commitment to maintaining the high standards that have already been achieved at Key Stage 4. The curriculum has been planned to develop and reinforce key skills at all key stages. Historical visits are arranged in most years for example to Styal Mill, Bolton Abbey and Hardwick Hall, and used well to extend what has been learned in the classroom. Improvements in accommodation since the last inspection have helped in the more effective sharing of resources and in developing a team approach.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

141. Currently standards in information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. Standards are not as high as those indicated by the most recent teacher assessments which judged attainment to be well above average, but pupils were not assessed by their teachers on all aspects of their performance in the subject. Pupils in Year 7 arrive from their primary schools with good basic skills in using computers. When asked to apply these in other subjects they do so with confidence. For example in English in Year 7 pupils used Power Point presentations to summarise extended text on witchcraft and in geography in Year 8 pupils used computers to generate scatter graphs to analyse development indices. Pupils in design and technology were able to program a computer numerically-controlled mill to machine individual maze shapes. In English, across Key Stage 3, word processors are well used to draft and present work. Pupils have limited opportunities, though, to explore the use of computers in depth and to secure understanding of the full potential of their use to help them solve problems. Completed work shows little evidence of finding information by using CD-Rom and the internet, and

of exchanging information using e-mail and other electronic means, primarily because of an historic lack of up-to-date computer facilities in the school.

142. At Key Stage 4, there is no planned programme of ICT for every pupil, and few subjects help pupils to develop their skills in the use of computers. In GCSE office applications, sound basic skills enable pupils to work with some precision in the creation of business documents and the handling of data. Although GCSE results in office applications in 2000 were above average, the lack of available up-to-date computers and technical difficulties with new equipment have restricted the opportunities to explore the more powerful features of office-standard applications. Standards in the office applications course are currently average but overall standards at Key Stage 4 in the use of ICT are below national expectations as pupils do not use computers sufficiently to help them in their work. Where computers are used, they are used well, such as in design and technology to improve the presentation of coursework, and more specifically in food technology to research nutritional qualities of foods.
143. In the sixth form, overall standards are average and students were seen on the inspection working with confidence using unfamiliar applications in design and technology, graphics, science and in key skills programs. They demonstrated very secure basic skills in handling computers and good problem-solving capabilities in using the equipment. Students on GNVQ courses were seen making good use of computers to organise information and improve the presentation of their work. Some sixth-formers interviewed confirmed that they had not received sufficient opportunities earlier in the school and that some of their skills were self-taught as a result of having computers at home. The improved facilities in the learning resources area and access to computers is making a significant contribution in helping students in the sixth form to practise and develop their skills outside lesson time. They are also encouraged to access websites for additional information as seen in lessons in economics and government and politics during the inspection.
144. Overall standards of teaching and learning are good. Where the use of ICT was observed in subjects at Key Stage 3, teachers' planning was good and pupils could see the real benefits of using computers in their work. There is energetic support given to teaching at this key stage by the school ICT co-ordinator; but in art, history, geography and physical education computers are not used enough. Across both key stages, pupils benefit from using computers to help them with their special educational needs, such as those dyslexic pupils who use multi-sensory computer programs to help them understand and interpret text. In GCSE office applications at Key Stage 4, teaching is satisfactory with work for pupils very well organised with sets of tasks which take pupils through business and computer applications and processes in a clear and precise manner. In office applications pupils can work at their own pace according to their capability, and is particularly well structured for pupils with special educational needs. A poor stock of up-to-date computer hardware and software resources restricts the relevant office experiences of the pupils on this course and has an adverse effect on their motivation.
145. In the sixth form, very good teaching was observed using computers. In science, a very well timed lesson allowed pupils to set up and conduct an experiment on the conservation of energy using light gates to give quick and very precise measurements of speed of movement of an object. In key skills pupils responded very well to a Power Point presentation exercise enabling them to improve communication as well as ICT skills. Students in their first year of graphics explored computer-aided design effectively in helping them improve their design accuracy.

146. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and many aspects of leadership are very good. Most of the success has been at Key Stage 3 but at Key Stage 4 statutory requirements are not being met. While the computer suites are effective and stimulating, a lack of up-to-date computers and software resources generally constrains the standards that pupils can achieve and teachers' and pupils' willingness to work with computers. A start has been made in updating the computer stock, though the new systems were unreliable at the time of the inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

147. GCSE results in French in 2000 were average and in Spanish results were above average. Results in French in 2000 were an improvement on recent years and boys were above average compared with boys nationally. In the last two years results in Spanish have been above average with an improving trend.
148. In 2000 there were no entries in modern foreign languages at A-level. In 1999 all three candidates in Spanish were successful at grades A–E but there were no candidates in French. In 1998 all four candidates in French and both candidates in Spanish attained A–E grades. Currently there are no French A-level courses running, and only a Year 12 course in Spanish with very low numbers.
149. The standards currently attained by pupils at Key Stage 3 in modern foreign languages are in line with national expectations. Pupils make very good progress in French in Year 7 and in some mixed-ability classes in Year 8 as a result of teachers usually planning enjoyable learning tasks and involving pupils in sociable activities. For example, in one Year 7 French group pupils developed their speaking and listening skills by being enthusiastically involved in a survey of their likes and dislikes and writing their answers on the board. However higher attaining pupils in French groups in Years 8 and 9, attain only average standards in listening, speaking and writing, as a result of teachers' insufficiently high expectations for these pupils. This was seen in a Year 9 French lesson in which pupils were not given opportunities to speak in complete sentences, and lesson time was not efficiently used for pupils' maximum language development. Boys generally do not attain well in French in Year 8, and few gain places in top sets in Year 9. More thought needs to be given to how boys can be better involved and achieve more highly by the kind of tasks which are set. In Spanish, beginners in both Years 8 and 9 attain average standards rapidly after learning the language for only a few weeks. Most pupils make excellent progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Spanish because they are well motivated and because teachers provide pupils with clear short-term objectives.
150. At Key Stage 4, standards are average overall in French and Spanish. Most pupils are very well prepared for the GCSE examinations in both languages. In the top sets in French, and in all Spanish groups, pupils generally have a good knowledge of grammar, and are accurate in their written use of language. This is influenced positively by the regular and careful marking of pupils' work and the importance given by teachers to writing in different tenses. However, in French, higher attaining pupils achieve only average standards in speaking and are not helped by most teachers not using the foreign language consistently in lessons, and at times not supporting pupils with extra work to extend and stretch them. Pupils can assess their work accurately when given clear guidance from teachers which helps in pupils learning from their own mistakes. For example, in a Year 11 French lesson the teacher used the board to support pupils' marking of a listening test, and gave justifiable praise for good results.
151. At both Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils with special educational needs make good progress

in French and Spanish as a result of the teachers' good planning to match the needs of all the pupils.

152. Standards in A-level Spanish are below average, but students are making very good progress towards attaining a lower pass grade. Students can use ICT effectively to store new language and explore cultural themes, influenced by the example of staff in using computer generated resources well in their teaching.
153. Pupils have good attitudes to language learning, co-operating well with each other in group work and presenting written work very well.
154. The quality of teaching is good overall, very good in a substantial proportion of lessons and in one lesson excellent. Teachers plan lessons well, and include a range of tasks which give opportunities for development of the language skills. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and tend to use time and resources well. Although teachers do not use the language being taught enough in lessons there are examples of the benefits of such use. In a Year 10 Spanish group lower attaining pupils responded confidently to questions with very good accents, and pupils in a Year 10 French group progressed in their listening and speaking skills through the teacher's consistent use of the language being taught. The Hispanic culture is promoted particularly strongly through the quality of displays in the department and generates further interest in the learning of the Spanish language.
155. New management of the modern foreign languages department is giving very clear direction to staff by updating schemes of work and policies, and by planning the systematic use of assessment information to raise standards. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved and the department has benefited from the provision of modern textbooks. Accommodation is a weakness with some rooms only being accessed by going through other teaching rooms which inevitably disturbs learning.

MUSIC

156. In the GCSE examination in 2000 only one of the five candidates attained a grade A*-C, with low attainment in composition in particular affecting results. In 1999 results with 18 candidates were also below average, with girls achieving much better than boys.
157. Although current standards are below national expectations overall at the end of Key Stage 3 they are in line with expectations in appraising and performing. It is the weaker standards in composition which pulls down overall standards. Pupils often use an extended musical vocabulary which helps in their appraisal and analysis of music. Pupils build well on their keyboard and instrumental skills and at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to use electronic keyboards and classroom instruments with competence, both for performance and composition. Attainment in singing meets national expectations. In relation to pupils' attainment on entry, progress across the key stage is satisfactory and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. However, they are unable to produce extended or developed composition and their ability to discuss music is limited. Lack of structure in composition was mentioned in the previous report.
158. As at Key Stage 3 standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are near to average in appraising and performing but below average in composition which depresses overall standards. Despite this there are some good features in composition in the work of pupils in Year 11 when derived from various styles and sources. In aural work pupils make good progress due to the emphasis in the department on developing basic skills.

Pupils' use of technical language is developed further which helps them to describe the music they hear. Pupils are conversant with a range of musical techniques and individual instrumental skills are used well in supporting both performance and composition. For example, one pupil composed and then performed an inventive piece for drums. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In one lesson a special needs pupil made very good progress in improving co-ordination through the use of music as therapy.

159. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good including in instrumental teaching. There are significant elements of good practice. Teacher knowledge is secure which helps in lesson planning, matching work to pupils' abilities and providing a range of interesting activities including the teaching of basic music skills in the sixth form. Keyboard and other musical skills are used to advantage in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. There are examples of computers being used well at Key Stage 3 in writing music which helps to ensure good standards of presentation but there are few opportunities to use computers at Key Stage 4. Assessment is not strong enough. Teachers know the GCSE examination requirements across the components of performing, composing and appraising but have not yet translated this into a formal departmental system to use in assessing pupils. Lack of assessment data makes the setting of suitable targets for improving pupils' attainment difficult. In addition, pupils do not have the opportunity to keep a record of their work in the form of a folio or cassette recording of projects. When special needs pupils are supported with additional classroom help there is a very positive effect on learning. Teaching ensures that pupils have opportunities to explore both their own culture and non-western music, for example in a Year 9 Gamelan project performed on classroom percussion. The seven visiting instrumental teachers make a valuable contribution to the curriculum and their work is well integrated into the work of the department. Pupils have good opportunities to take instrumental grade examinations on a variety of instruments.
160. Pupils' attitudes in music lessons are satisfactory and they respond well to challenging work. Occasionally poor behaviour at the start of lessons mars the pace of learning. Pupils work well individually and with enthusiasm in instrumental groups. At Key Stage 3 they co-operate well in groups in composition lessons and are enthusiastic in performing tasks. Pupils clearly enjoy playing their compositions and this is helping in addressing deficiencies in this area. Independent learning skills are being developed well but pupils sometimes lack confidence when answering questions.
161. The current temporary management of the department has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of music in the school. Good progress has been made in a very short period of time to address weaknesses and the fact that the department has made insufficient progress since the last inspection. Much is being done to raise the amount of regular ongoing extra-curricular activities from a low base to supplement the very good annual productions. This increase in activity was recognised by parents in the pre-inspection meeting. New schemes of work are being rapidly implemented. The governing body is determined that music shall have a much higher profile in the school. A start in the right direction has been made.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

162. A-level results in sports studies in 2000 were well below average with only two out of eight students passing with E grades and were not as good as in 1999 when all three candidates were successful. In 2000, students' attainment on entry to the A-level course was too low to be able to cope with the standards required despite progress

made during the course.

163. Standards currently attained by the majority of the Year 12 students in sports studies are below average. They have a good technical vocabulary and are able to discuss and critically analyse the changing aspects of leisure activities but their essay writing lacks structure and depth. There is little evidence of their own research and independent learning at an early stage of the course. In relation to what students achieved at GCSE progress is good in the sixth form but not up to A-level standard yet.
164. Pupils at Key Stage 3, both boys and girls, attain standards in line with national expectations. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with average performance skills in a variety of activities and the majority of girls in Year 7, for example, have satisfactory basic football skills. The majority of boys in Year 9 have good ball skills in both football and basketball and are able to pass accurately into space created by team members. Pupils build and extend these performance skills satisfactorily throughout the key stage but they do not develop their planning and evaluative skills sufficiently. A minority of boys are achieving above the nationally expected standard and are able to change team strategies and tactics following perceptive observations of their opponents. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
165. The attainment of the majority of boys in physical education lessons at Key Stage 4 is in line with standards expected nationally and a minority attain above those levels. In basketball, for example, boys in Years 10 and 11 are competent in their ball skills and have a good understanding of the basic rules and tactics. The majority of girls do not meet the expected levels and are underachieving. The majority of girls do not understand the rules of badminton and have little strength or depth of shot. In aerobics girls lack tension and quality in their movement and are not able to prepare their bodies independently and effectively for exercise in warm-up exercises.
166. GCSE examinations will be taken for the first time by students in 2002. Forty pupils, mainly boys, have chosen the subject. This is just over a quarter of the year group and illustrates the keen interest which boys have for the subject. The majority of students are currently attaining in line with the national average. They have a sound general knowledge of sport and a good knowledge of international performers in a variety of activities. Pupils are beginning to compare and give reasons for their different muscle and bone structure but their knowledge and use of technical language is limited, for example when describing the main muscle groups and training methods.
167. Individual pupils and teams achieve high standards in district and county competitions in rugby, athletics, football, cross-country and netball. One girl plays in the England Under-16 football squad and several boys represent local professional clubs. The attainment of these pupils is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from opportunities offered.
168. In a minority of lessons teaching is good or very good with pupils benefiting in their learning from the teacher's subject expertise in an atmosphere where very good relationships are established with pupils. Overall, however, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory and the amount of unsatisfactory teaching is higher than at the last inspection. Whilst there are examples of lesson objectives being set clearly teachers' planning is weak overall. There is a lack of detail in the schemes of work, for example in indicating the various teaching methods which are possible. This results in pupils being given insufficient independent learning tasks especially to enable and encourage them to take responsibility for warming up and stretching out. In many lessons teachers do not find the correct balance between teaching performance skills and

giving pupils the opportunity to plan, observe and evaluate their work and that of others. Teachers do not set sufficient independent learning tasks and do not appreciate their value as a foundation for those at Key Stage 3 who later progress to the GCSE course.

169. In most lessons pupils want to learn and this helps them to progress satisfactorily even when teaching is not sufficiently focused. Learning was unsatisfactory in three lessons at Key Stage 4 because teachers had insufficient subject expertise and did not attempt to teach the planning and evaluative aspects of the National Curriculum. The quality of learning is good in the sixth form. The major weakness is at Key Stage 4 for girls where the quality of learning and progress are unsatisfactory. The learning of girls is hindered at both Key Stages 3 and 4 by staff absences and the difficulties in making satisfactory alternative arrangements despite the efforts of senior staff and the head of department. This was seen at the inspection when two of their teachers were absent on the same day which resulted in half the year group having no physical activity. This clearly affects pupils' motivation and participation and has forced the school to make alternative provision for pupils in Year 11 where an enrichment programme replaces regular physical education lessons and which results in nearly half of pupils not taking part in any physical activity. This is a breach of statutory requirements and confirms the parents' views that girls' learning in physical education and the provision made are unsatisfactory. In addition girls are not getting the same opportunities as boys in extra-curricular activities and this adds to their lack of motivation and interest. In a few lessons the unsatisfactory behaviour of the boys hindered their learning. They were restless, noisy and frequently off task.
170. The head of department has been working with significant staffing difficulties over several years and this has limited his effectiveness in providing clear educational direction for the subject. He leads by good example in his own teaching, supports the new member of staff well and has very good relationships with the pupils. There have been some positive developments including a broadening of the curriculum through additional units and examination courses at GCSE and A-level and the introduction of an annual sports day. A start has been made in using formal assessment procedures but many systems are not fully in place and where policies are in order they are not consistently applied by all teachers. The department lacks organisation and cohesion and many of the issues raised in the previous inspection report have not been successfully addressed. The use of display material in the physical education area and at focal points throughout the school is poor. The school has some unsatisfactory facilities for physical education. Efficiency is affected by the lack of a department office or a dedicated teaching base for theoretical aspects of the subject. The poor weather and waterlogged playing fields experienced during the inspection week highlighted the need for a sports hall.

MEDIA STUDIES

171. GCSE results in media studies were below average in both 2000 and 1999. Very small numbers of students took the examination at A level in 1999 and 2000. Numbers are too small to make national comparisons but all three candidates in the last two years have been successful at grades A–E. Media studies has been introduced into the curriculum since the time of the last inspection.
172. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. Pupils co-operate well in group work. Sixth-form students successfully extend and develop their analytical and critical skills. Higher attainers are able to develop their written work beyond simple description but lower attainers resort to straightforward narrative in written work. Some are able to analyse and appraise the technical and literary aspects of film performance to very

good standards. In one lesson effective comparisons were made between different readings of film based on gender. Pupils made satisfactory progress in a lesson using storyboarding where pupils developed interesting ideas and discussed their work with enthusiasm.

173. Teaching is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop skills, particularly in relation to text-based work. However, lack of a suitable environment and equipment for the subject hampers progress in some aspects of media studies. This is because pupils do not have a full range of technical resources available to them. There are also few current opportunities for pupils to use computers appropriately.
174. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are usually good. They respond well to challenging work. Their response is often attentive, with appropriate levels of interest and co-operation. There are good teacher-pupil relationships. There is a determination by the leadership and management of the department to raise standards in media studies. Assessment systems are in place with target setting for pupils to raise standards being used and developed.

GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (GNVQ)

175. In 2000 students were assessed on intermediate courses in GNVQ in business, health and social care and leisure and tourism and at advanced level in business. Most students attained at least a pass on their course and some attained a merit or distinction. Some are continuing their studies into this year. Completion rates with small numbers are mainly good. A narrower range of courses is currently operating in the school with no advanced business or leisure and tourism.
176. Students in the sixth form were observed during the inspection in their GNVQ studies in business and health and social care. It was not possible to see the full range of health and social care courses as a result of teacher absence.
177. In business at intermediate level and health and social care at foundation and intermediate levels students' attainment is mostly in line with course requirements and pass grade standard. In business, students are able to understand the main functions of marketing within a company, measures to meet customer expectations and key financial documentation. In the health and social care seen, students of varying levels of attainment worked diligently on individual tasks. Students were seen making good use of ICT to improve the presentation of their work. Students in health and social care were seen working at foundation and intermediate levels. Those aiming at foundation level have weaker literacy skills but are still able to research information and organise their notes with a good degree of accuracy.
178. Students have a satisfactory capacity to work on their own but that is only achieved with the watchful backup of teachers and a careful balance in teaching of providing information and enabling students to take responsibility for their work. Evidence of this was also seen in the files of students' completed work. Greater independence is developing as the courses progress.
179. Students' learning and progress is good and in classes observed they were clearly benefiting from teachers who had a good knowledge and understanding of the vocational and occupational areas which they teach. As an integral and essential part of GNVQ courses there is good teaching of key skills including information and communication technology. In business there is evidence of the good linking of theory

and practice with one lesson on marketing linked to a forthcoming visit to a local company. Similarly in health and social care an imminent visit by an outside speaker from a special school is being well linked to vocational units studied. Individual assignments are sufficiently demanding and students are encouraged to aspire to the right levels with good support from teaching. In health and social care the pace of learning was helped by extension tasks being available for students who completed the original work set. There is good use of questioning, for example to help students to think about the responsibilities at work and the importance of teamwork.

180. Specific assessment routines for GNVQs are well established and students are well informed about the success criteria for assignments. They know what they need to do to achieve at the highest levels possible and are clear on deadlines which have to be met. The motivation of students and their continuity of learning is affected in some lessons in health and social care by teacher absences and the lack of suitable alternative arrangements to cover the specialism.