

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **LEEK HIGH SCHOOL**

Leek, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124406

Headteacher: Ms Judy Samuel

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Cosway  
(OFSTED No: 2734)

Dates of inspection: 9 - 12 October 2000

Inspection number: 223736

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	13 to 18 Years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Springfield Road Leek Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST13 6EU
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor Richard Kempa
Date of previous inspection:	4 May 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr Paul Cosway (OFSTED No: 2734)	Registered inspector	Business Studies	What sort of school is it?
		Equal opportunities	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Mr Daljit Singh (OFSTED No: 9974)	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr Akram Khan OBE (OFSTED No: 27296)	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mrs Sandra Tweddell (OFSTED No: 1789)	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
Mrs Marie Blewitt (OFSTED No: 23550)	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Mr Jeffrey Cooling (OFSTED No: 14704)	Team inspector	Geography	
Mr Patrick O'Neill (OFSTED No: 31958)	Team inspector	Art	
Ms Jacqueline Pentlow (OFSTED No: 30563)	Team inspector	Physical education	
Mr Roy Pitcher (OFSTED No: 3930)	Team inspector	Religious education	
Mr Stuart Rawcliffe (OFSTED No: 20420)	Team inspector	Science	
Mr Peter Slape (OFSTED No: 23891)	Team inspector	Design and technology	

Mr Michael Stanton (OFSTED No: 27351)	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
Mr Robert Tweed (OFSTED No: 1845)	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
Ms Patricia Walker (OFSTED No: 15372)	Team inspector	History	
Ms Marianne Young (OFSTED No: 31660)	Team inspector	Music	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a co-educational secondary school, educating children from the age of 13 to 18, one of two in the town. It is smaller than most secondary schools. There are 566 pupils on roll, of whom 123 are in the sixth form. There are more boys than girls. Pupils are drawn from a very large and diverse catchment area, part urban and part rural, including isolated hamlets and farms and containing some areas of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, just over 12 per cent, is close to average for the country as a whole. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is also close to average, but the numbers with statements of special educational needs, identified as having more serious needs, is above average. Almost all the pupils are white, although the school does have the advantage of a small number of pupils who represent other world cultures. For less than one per cent of pupils English is an additional language, which is below the average nationally. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average, overall, but is improving steadily.

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

This is an effective school providing its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Teaching is good overall with excellent or very good teaching in almost a fifth of lessons. The headteacher and deputy, both relatively recent appointments, have put in place very good systems for raising attainment and processes for improving the ethos of the school. These have not been in place long enough to have made an impact on GCSE results or on the attitudes of all children, but there is evidence that pupils are beginning to make better progress as a result. The school has good links with parents and the local community. All staff work hard to ensure that most pupils learn well. The leadership and management of the school are good overall, though there are some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of middle and senior managers. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils make good progress overall.
- Most pupils develop positive attitudes to school and work hard, realising the importance of study. In general, their behaviour is good in lessons.
- Overall performance at GCSE is above average.
- Teaching is good across the school and often very good in the sixth form.
- The leadership and management of the school are good.
- There are good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress.

#### **What could be improved**

- A relatively small number of pupils, mainly boys, underachieve at GCSE.
- Attendance is below average.
- Although assessment systems are good, assessment is not used consistently across subjects to help pupils to attain highly.
- There is a small number of pupils whose attitudes to school are negative and who do not share the learning ethos that the school promotes.
- Some middle managers are not working rigorously enough to ensure that school policies are implemented consistently and effectively.

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

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

The school's last full inspection was in May 1995. At that time, the school was said to be giving pupils a satisfactory education, with many good features, including strong and effective links with the local community. Weaknesses were highlighted in the range of courses and the quality of teaching in the sixth form, in the match between pupils' abilities and the tasks set for them, in vocational education courses, in the provision for information technology and in the monitoring and review of work in subject departments. There were also some statutory requirements not being met, for teaching religious education in the sixth form and for the daily act of collective worship for all. These requirements are still not met in full, although improvements have been made.

Overall, however, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last report, despite being under threat of amalgamation three years ago. The performance of pupils in GCSE examinations has improved more rapidly over recent years than the improvement nationally. Over the last three years, the school's results at A-level have been close to average, an improvement since 1995. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching. Almost twenty per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory in the last report. Now, only three per cent is unsatisfactory. There has been good progress in the areas picked out as key issues. Sixth form provision has improved, as has monitoring and the provision for information and communication technology. Good leadership from the headteacher and deputy, along with effective monitoring and good teaching, ensure that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

## 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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	C
A-levels/AS-levels	E	B	D	

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

Over the past three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been average compared with the national average, but well below average for similar schools. The sharing of Key Stage 3 with the partner middle school, where the pupils spend the majority of the key stage, makes it difficult to judge progress. However, the pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their two terms in the high school prior to taking the national tests. In recent years the performance at Key Stage 3 has risen broadly in line with the average nationally. Attainment has risen at GCSE, at a higher rate than that found nationally and the improvement in pupils' attainment from the end of Key Stage 3 to GCSE is well above that in similar schools. The percentage of pupils who have attained five or more passes at A\* to C grades is close to average. The overall performance of pupils in GCSE is above average, as the table shows. Fewer boys are attaining good passes at GCSE than girls and the gap is greater than that nationally.

The inspection team found that attainment is currently similar to that indicated by last year's test and examination results. Attainment is high in relation to that in other subjects in geography, English literature, double science and French. Attainment is relatively low in German, religious education, history, business education and design and technology. The school has set itself targets for the Year 2001 of 52.5 per cent of pupils attaining five or more A\* to C GCSE passes and 99.4 per cent attaining one or more A\* to G passes. These are ambitious targets and an indication of the school's high expectations.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall: most pupils enjoy school and most work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory: behaviour is generally good in lessons, but sometimes boisterous in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good: pupils relate very well to each other and to adults and accept responsibility very well. Most work well together and are courteous in lessons.
Attendance	Below average, although levels of unauthorised absence are low.



The positive attitudes to work and school that the school engenders in most pupils are a contributory factor in its success. Most pupils value the school and what it has to offer them. However, the school needs to work even harder to impress on some boys the value and importance of the education it offers them. Many boys and most girls want to succeed and so they sustain concentration in order to get the most out of their lessons. The pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility, as members of the school council, for example, and respond to these well. In the caring atmosphere of this small secondary school, most pupils learn to care for and respect each other. The low levels of attendance of a small number of pupils interrupt their learning and slow their progress. The school works hard to try to convince these relatively few families of the importance of regular attendance.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good overall. In the sixth form, just over a third of lessons are very good or excellent. Teaching is good in Key Stages 3 and 4, with a higher proportion of good teaching in the latter. It is best in the sixth form, where almost three quarters is good or better. Almost all teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons thoroughly and manage pupils well. Almost a fifth of teaching across the school is very good or excellent. Teaching is satisfactory or better in about 97 per cent of lessons. Where it is unsatisfactory, it is because lessons are taught by non-specialists or the work is not interesting or challenging enough to keep pupils' interest. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily in English and mathematics lessons, but not consistently across the school. Overall, the quality of teaching is a strength of the school and, as a result, learning skills develop well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: the broad and balanced curriculum provides pupils with a satisfactory range of learning experiences, with a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: the provision for these pupils is meeting their needs well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory: there is good provision for social and moral development and satisfactory provision for spiritual development. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory, with particular strengths in the range of cultural visits, but multi-cultural provision needs development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. Satisfactory procedures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the pupils.

The school works well in partnership with parents. The information it provides for parents is good, with good reports on progress. The curriculum is generally broad, balanced and appropriate, and the careers education is good. There is insufficient coverage of religious education in the sixth form. The school cares well for its pupils overall. The procedures for ensuring good attendance are good, but not always effective with some families. There is evidence of oppressive behaviour, but the school works hard to eliminate bullying. Some subjects, such as religious education and music, portray positively a wide range of cultures in order to prepare pupils well for life in a multi-ethnic society, but it is not done consistently across all subjects.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good: good leadership from the headteacher and deputy head provides clear direction for the work of the school, setting high expectations of both pupils and staff. Some middle managers provide very effective leadership, but monitoring of teaching is inconsistent. The school is managed well overall and this has been the key to its recent improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: the governors are supportive of the school and give of their time willingly to help the school and be involved in its work. They fulfil their responsibilities adequately and are growing in their role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good: at a whole-school level, the school evaluates its performance well and uses this information to guide the priorities for further development.
The strategic use of resources	Almost all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. The accommodation is used well, though there are weaknesses, especially in the indoor facilities for physical education. Effective use is made of learning resources.

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

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>The large majority of parents, over 80 per cent, who responded think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children are making good progress;</li> <li>• their children like school;</li> <li>• teaching is good in school;</li> <li>• the school expects its pupils to work hard and is developing responsible attitudes in them;</li> <li>• they would be comfortable approaching the school with any questions or problems they may have;</li> <li>• the school is led and managed well.</li> </ul>	<p>Of the many parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 per cent of parents are concerned about the amount of homework that is set;</li> <li>• 15 per cent do not believe that the school works closely enough with parents or that they given enough information about how their children are progressing.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the positive points made by parents, finding that pupils make good progress, behave well and develop a sense of responsibility. The positive attitudes to school and good behaviour of the large majority are positive influences, helping them to attain well and benefit from the good teaching. The inspectors found homework provision satisfactory, links with parents good and the information they are given about their children's progress above average. At the meeting for parents, there were also concerns expressed about the cost of fares for post 16 students on the school buses (students at the local college travel free) and the need for the school to market itself more actively in order to recruit as many pupils as possible.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The attainment of pupils on entry is below average. The attainment of pupils locally in the National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds has been improving, but these cohorts have not yet entered the high school. The pupils in Years 9 to 11 attained results that were well below average in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, though attainment in science was close to average. Overall, girls' attainment in these tests has been consistently below average in recent years and boys have been well below average. There are more boys than girls in the school, so this has a significant effect on the ability levels of the intake. In the present Year 11, for example, there are 67 girls and 92 boys. Standardised tests of reading and spelling skills indicate that there are twice as many pupils with levels of literacy below average than above on entry. Overall, pupils are making good progress, attaining levels in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests that are close to average. At GCSE, attainment is above average overall, with almost all pupils gaining at least one GCSE pass in 1999 and 93 per cent gaining 5 or more A\* - G passes, compared with the national average for all schools of 89.8 per cent. The proportion gaining 5 or more A\* - C passes, 46.6 per cent, was close to the national average. This dropped slightly, to 42 per cent, in 2000, largely because of the higher proportion of boys in the cohort. Compared with similar schools, overall attainment at GCSE was average.
2. Overall attainment levels at the end of Key Stage 3, by which time pupils have had a full year in the school, are close to average. This represents good progress since Year 6, although the challenge for the school is to maintain this good level of progress with future cohorts, whose attainment levels in their National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests have been higher. In English, pupils' skills of reading and writing are close to average overall. They read with understanding and accuracy. Their written work is often imaginative and perceptive, but many pupils make spelling and grammar errors, especially in their first drafts. Speaking and listening skills vary widely and are slightly below average overall. Some pupils find it difficult to listen for sustained periods and many lack fluency when speaking. Numeracy skills are developed well in the mathematics department, although there is insufficient emphasis on these throughout the curriculum. Attainment in mathematics is average overall. Attainment in science is average and pupils make good progress. Across the rest of the curriculum it is a similar picture, with average levels of attainment in art, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, music, physical education and religious education. Attainment in history is below average. Pupils make good progress in modern foreign languages and their attainment is average at the end of Year 9.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in English and mathematics is slightly below average, partly because of the number of pupils with special educational needs in Year 11 and partly because of the high preponderance of boys – who make up two thirds of this year group. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of science and reach average levels of attainment. In history and business studies, attainment is below average, but it is close to average or above in all other subjects. Pupils attain the expected levels for their age in design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education. In art, attainment has been below average, but has risen and is currently above. Standards have also risen since the last report in music, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages and are above average now in all these subjects.
4. Attainment in the sixth form is slightly above average overall. Students respond well to the good teaching and make good progress. A-level results have been above average recently in English and this reflects current standards. Attainment is close to average in science and mathematics. Students specialising in modern foreign languages achieve well and reach above average standards. Attainment is below average in history, because students lack confidence in some important skills, but is average in design and technology, geography, business studies and information and communication technology. It is average in art, with a small proportion of pupils attaining good standards.

5. Pupils with special educational needs attain well for their ability.
6. There has been improvement since the last report, especially in raising attainment in information and communication technology. However, changes in the composition of the cohort have masked this to some extent and the threat of the closure of the site and amalgamation with the other school in the town that hung over the school restricted subject development for a time. Overall, improvement since the last report has been satisfactory.

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

7. The attitudes to learning of the large majority of pupils are good and these are complemented by their generally good behaviour in the classroom. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are sound. Overall attendance is unsatisfactory, below the national average, although levels of unauthorised absence are below the national level for similar schools.
8. Most pupils like coming to school and approach their learning with confidence. Where teaching and classroom management are good, pupils show interest and enthusiasm for learning. Levels of concentration vary, but most pupils can sustain appropriate levels, especially where topics are interesting and informative. Where opportunities are provided for group work, most pupils use their time wisely, sharing ideas and taking part in discussion, which enhances their knowledge and understanding of topics. The higher achievers use their initiative to pose and answer questions in a plausible logical manner. This was particularly evident in a number of mathematics, English and information and communication technology lessons.
9. Inspection evidence also indicates that most pupils approach their learning constructively and take a positive interest in their school life. They take part in a good range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, except where problems with after-school transport make this too difficult. For example, during the inspection a number of pupils were observed using computers to complete their homework assignments. Others spoke enthusiastically about their involvement in the school production of *Grease* and in the girls' football team. Sixth form students spoke passionately about their residential visits, including visits to universities, which provided them with good quality information about higher education and an opportunity to meet students from other schools. These opportunities make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and progress, and enable them to make informed choices.
10. Behaviour is good in the classroom and satisfactory around the school. Most pupils behave appropriately in the classroom. They listen to teachers' instructions and comply with the school's code of conduct. This enables them to work in an organised and disciplined manner. However, there is a very small but significant minority of pupils across the school who persistently engage in disruptive, silly and immature behaviour. Their inappropriate actions can adversely affect learning and teaching. For example, in a personal and social education lesson, a small number of pupils was observed engaging in inappropriate behaviour. These pupils were noisy, boisterous and insolent and they disrupted the lesson. This inappropriate behaviour was also evident in a music lesson. Outside of the classroom, behaviour is often sound and sometimes good. Most pupils move around the school in an orderly manner, but a small minority is, when not supervised, rude and boisterous. Visitors were generally made welcome, but there were occasions when a very small minority of pupils displayed racist and sexist attitudes and behaviour. Bullying is vigorously challenged by the teachers, who are caring and vigilant, but there are occasional instances, nevertheless.
11. As a consequence during the last school year there were 53 fixed period exclusions, which involved several persistent offenders. The number of fixed period exclusions is above the number normally found in secondary schools of a similar size. There are no permanent exclusions. Parents and pupils interviewed are adamant that all types of aggressive behaviour are adequately challenged. They were also confident that any future incidents would be dealt with equally effectively.
12. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are sound and this promotes the good personal development of pupils. There are constructive friendships which cross gender and race boundaries. Pupils can be observed engaged in positive dialogue, sharing humour and supporting each other. Most pupils and teachers work together constructively and teachers respond by

providing opportunities for their personal development. For example, the school council consists of pupil representatives from all year groups, including the sixth form. Pupils and students in Years 10, 11 and sixth formers engage in work experience. Pupils and students are provided with opportunities for residential visits. Almost all of Year 9 take part in a residential week, to France, for example. These opportunities assist students to become independent, support each other and to become responsible citizens of the school and wider community.

13. Attendance and time keeping are unsatisfactory. A few pupils fail to observe appropriate levels of attendance and others arrive late for lessons. Some deliberately waste time between lessons, arrive late and disrupt learning. The absence of a regular Educational Welfare Officer due to retirement has also contributed to falling attendance. The school was unable to pursue absences quickly and efficiently. This situation has recently been redressed and the school has started a first day contact system for absence. The large majority of pupils and parents support the school's drive to improve attendance and time keeping. Registers are taken at prescribed times and administered to ensure they comply with statutory requirements.
14. Since the last report, attendance has fallen, but attitudes, behaviour and relationships remain purposeful. However, the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils around the school is a concern.

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

15. At the time of the last report, teaching was generally sound. There was good or very good teaching in 40 per cent of lessons. There was unsatisfactory teaching in 20 per cent of lessons, a high proportion, some of which were affected by temporary changes of room or teaching staff. Most teaching was sound, purposeful and well paced, although lessons were sometimes slow to start. The main weaknesses in teaching were in lack of challenge, the inadequate levels of support for the lower attaining pupils, teaching objectives not being shared with the class and assessment not being used effectively to improve pupils' attainment.
16. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised and is well placed to continue to improve in future. The senior management team has put in place a rigorous and effective programme of monitoring of teaching across the school, involving outside advisers, and has used the information gained from this to set in place professional development for all members of staff as well as individual teachers. This is raising the standard of teaching and also ensuring greater consistency of teaching approaches across the school. An example of this is the development of sharing learning objectives with pupils at the start of the lesson in order that they know what they are expected to achieve. Almost all teachers are doing this, a significant improvement on the situation at the time of the last report. Most revisit these aims at the end of the lesson in order to reinforce and consolidate learning, but this is not yet done as consistently, sometimes because of poor time management. Teachers do not always allow enough time at the end of the lesson for recapping the ground that has been covered.
17. The quality of teaching has improved and teaching is now good overall. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced and represents around three per cent of the total. Teaching is good or better in approximately two thirds of lessons and the proportion of very good and excellent teaching has increased to almost 20 per cent. Teaching is good overall across all three key stages. There is excellent teaching in three per cent of lessons, very good teaching in 16 per cent, good teaching in 46 per cent and satisfactory teaching in 31 per cent.
18. There is a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, largely because of the difficulties that teachers face overcoming negative attitudes from pupils. Year 9 had only been in the school five weeks at the time of the inspection and the school's expectations of behaviour and work rate had not had time to influence all pupils. This meant that in a higher proportion of lessons, the pace was relatively slow or there were interruptions whilst the teacher dealt with inappropriate behaviour from a small minority. The pace of learning is generally quicker in Key Stage 4 classes. There are no problems with negative attitudes in sixth form classes and so teachers have every opportunity to support students' learning well and demonstrate their good subject knowledge.

19. The strengths in teaching are common to both key stages and the sixth form. In all lessons, apart from the few instances of unsatisfactory teaching, teachers form positive relationships with their classes. Their control and management of pupils are generally good. As a result, a positive learning environment is sustained in which pupils are ready to work, work hard and want to succeed. The lessons are planned with a good variety of different teaching methods and these usually meet the needs of the pupils and help them to attain the objectives the teacher has set. Almost all teachers share the aims of the lessons with the pupils at the start of the lesson and then return to them at the end in order to ensure that pupils understand what they are to do and why. Sometimes, however, the aims that are presented are in fact activities - the lesson plan - and this is less effective, because pupils are unsure of the purpose of the lesson.
20. A feature of very good teaching is good subject knowledge that gives teachers the ability and confidence to extend and challenge pupils. Very good teaching in the school is characterised by the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject that transfers to the pupils so that they are motivated and interested. There were good examples of this in an English lesson for sixth form students, in which the teacher's own interest and love of the subject brought the best out of the students in lively, high quality debate. Teaching is very well planned in these lessons. A good example of this was seen in an A-level lesson on advanced algebra, in which highly competent and well planned teaching stimulated the students' interest well and ensured that they worked hard. There was a good balance of explanation and individual work that allowed the pupils to learn skills and then practise and consolidate them. In all lessons that were characterised by very good or excellent teaching, the teacher's expectations of the pupils' work and attitudes were very high and the pupils responded well to this and worked hard to reach the levels the teacher expected. Where teaching is excellent, as was the case in a design and technology lesson with Year 11 pupils, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, graphics, combined with very good pace and clear timings and deadlines. This meant that the pupils worked hard to keep up with the pace the teacher set, and good relationships and interesting tasks ensured they were motivated to succeed. It was an excellent lesson because they achieved well and made rapid progress in their learning.
21. A weakness in teaching in some lessons that are otherwise satisfactory or good is the lack of use of assessment to focus work on the specific needs of individual pupils and provide them with clear targets. In a food technology lesson, for example, in which the teaching was effective overall, the needs of one pupil with a physical disability were catered for well, but otherwise the work set and the levels of support were the same for all, irrespective of their needs. In a German lesson, the teacher had planned well and gave clear explanations. What would have been a good lesson became satisfactory because the control of the class was not firm enough to ensure that the pupils worked hard for all of the time. In a geography lesson that was judged to be satisfactory, the teacher's subject knowledge was good and resources were used well: class control was effective in this case, but too much time was spent talking to the class, leaving too little time for them to work individually.
22. There were very few unsatisfactory lessons. The weaknesses were related to the amount of learning that took place. In a physical education lesson taught by a non-specialist outside in the rain, the teacher did not have the necessary range of skills and knowledge to adapt the lesson plan to the adverse conditions and to ensure that the pupils were gainfully and appropriately occupied. In a geography lesson with a low ability class, the teacher did not succeed in motivating or engaging the class in the task, especially the boys, and they did relatively little work because they lacked interest.
23. Teaching is good overall in most subjects – good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. This is true of English, mathematics and science. In all three subjects, good subject knowledge helps to give teachers confidence and to inspire pupils. There is some very good teaching in all three subjects, although in science some inexperienced teachers are struggling to motivate some older pupils and this caused a small number of lessons to be unsatisfactory. Teaching is also good overall in music, where there is some very good teaching at Key Stage 4, physical education, with a good emphasis on the development of skills, and information and communication technology, where lessons are well planned and teachers have a very good command of the subject.

24. Teaching is satisfactory overall in religious education, where teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and use resources well, but introductions to lessons are sometimes too long. It is satisfactory in history, although skills of independent research are not developed well, and just satisfactory in business studies, though the pace of lessons is sometimes slow. In modern foreign languages, enthusiastic and committed teaching leads to good lessons in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and satisfactory teaching overall in Key Stage 4, where the management and control of pupils are sometimes a problem. Teaching in design and technology is satisfactory up to the end of Key Stage 4 and very good at sixth form level. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily in English and mathematics lessons, but the skills developed in these subject areas are not reinforced consistently across the school. Some subject teachers, especially in science, work hard to teach the specialist vocabulary that the subject requires, but spelling and grammar are not corrected regularly by all teachers. Homework is set regularly by teachers in almost all subjects and the tasks set are generally worthwhile and help pupils to extend their knowledge and skills.
25. In general, teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress. Teachers work constructively with learning support assistants, and there is evidence of effective, joint planning. Learning support assistants (LSA's) are the school's main resource for helping pupils with special needs. They show motivation and commitment in their role. They provide valuable support to pupils with special educational needs and, where appropriate, to other pupils who need help.

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

26. The curriculum is broad and balanced across the school and offers pupils good opportunities at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum covers the subjects of the National Curriculum. Pupils study both French and German on entry to the school in Year 9. They are given the opportunity to continue with both languages at Key Stage 4 but most select one language. All pupils study English, mathematics, physical education, science and, in most years, the Youth Award Scheme. They select five further subjects from five option blocks. A short course in religious education is mandatory for all pupils in Year 10.
27. The school has established sound links with the local college and another secondary school to offer a range of twenty-two subjects at AS and A-level and GNVQ. The Technological Baccalaureate is also offered and pupils have the opportunity to study law through an innovative video link course. Religious education is taught in the sixth form, but not with sufficient regularity or in enough depth. This is, nevertheless, an improvement on the situation described in the last inspection report. Generally, the school has satisfactory regard to the equal access of all pupils to the curriculum.
28. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are usually kept in their classes and given support from learning support assistants, who support effectively. In most subjects, pupils are grouped according to their attainment and extra support is put into the lower attaining groups. This is effective in the large majority of cases, but in some low attaining classes there is a large number of boys, a few of whom are disaffected and who disturb others.
29. The timetable covers two weeks and pupils are put into two parallel populations on entry. A variety of arrangements exists for grouping the populations, for example, setting by attainment or forming a small class of lower attaining pupils and two classes with a range of attainment. In some of these classes with a wide range of attainment, the highest and lowest attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged or supported by their work. Although the school week is technically twenty-five hours, pupils have to travel some distance between the sites and, frequently, up to ten minutes are lost from each lesson, which reduces the time available for teaching and can cause disruption in trying to settle a class to work.
30. All pupils follow a course in personal and social education, which has recently been revised. The Youth Award Scheme is offered to all pupils from Year 9 upwards. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a new course in life skills. A course in citizenship is being written and members of staff

have recently been asked to complete an audit with the aim of identifying the areas that are covered by departments and to find out the gaps that need to be covered. These courses give good provision for pupils' social and moral development. Year 9 pupils follow a course that seeks to encourage them to think about how they can contribute to society. One class was asked to think about how they could help to make their community better. Their ideas were reasonable and they could justify their plans, such as the group that decided they would like to help make paths in a country park. Their discussion showed an awareness of the moral and social issues that are involved in such a project. The life skills course covers health education, and until recently, the school has involved the school nurse. Currently, this post is vacant. Sex education is mainly dealt with in science, but, in the sixth form, it is covered in general studies. The emotional side of sex education is covered in the scheme of work for personal, social and health education.

31. Most departments have guidance for developing pupils' skills of literacy and numeracy but there is inconsistency in the implementation of the guidance. Staff in the science department teach the specific vocabulary of the subject and have helpful word lists to which pupils can refer. In other departments, subject specific language is not corrected if it is spelt wrongly, and there is little attempt to teach the styles of writing that are required for the subject. A few departments are aware of the need to teach skills of numeracy that relate to their subjects, but this practice is not widespread. Subject guidance on the teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, but some, for example science and mathematics, offer good guidance, whereas in other departments the guidance is skimpy and offers little support for planning lessons.
32. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are attended by a relatively small number of pupils, but this is affected by the fact that a large number travel on the 29 school buses so cannot stay. The activities cover a wide range of interests. Pupils take part in competitions with other schools and between the school 'houses'. There are many visits and residential for each year group. Higher attaining pupils are given good opportunities to extend their learning through the enrichment courses that are offered by many departments. The art department, for example, brought in an artist who introduced pupils to new techniques.
33. The careers education programme is good; it begins in Year 9 and continues through into the sixth form. The provision is well planned and organised. All pupils in Year 11 go on work experience and many have already had a week of this in Year 10. This supports well their personal development and independence. The Youth Award scheme contributes successfully to pupils' preparation for this, as does the Industry Conference in Year 10. For the past two years, the school has been linked with an independent school in Newcastle-under-Lyme, through a project run by the Department for Education and Employment. Both schools are shortly to take part in an initiative that involves Year 9 pupils going to Newcastle to interview a range of professional people about their work. Pupils in the sixth form are involved in the Millennium Lectures, given by people who have achieved highly in their lives.
34. Strong links with the community enhance the curriculum for all pupils. The school is involved with others in a Community Enterprise programme that works with local senior citizens and services that care for people. Links with the feeder middle school and other schools and colleges are satisfactory. Many departments have worked with their colleagues in the middle school to provide curriculum continuity across the two schools.
35. The provision for pupils' personal development is good overall. Provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve the provision for collective worship through a working group, which has been looking at reflection as a means of involving all pupils. The group has provided good guidance for staff to use in assemblies and their tutor groups. Two current themes are caring and achievement and two assemblies were observed which created a very good ethos of spirituality through the rapt attention of the pupils. The assembly dealt with the achievements of a young person before her death and moved many of the pupils. The impact of the new approach on the spiritual development of pupils is too early to judge. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils; for example, half the short GCSE course which is taken by all pupils in Year 10 considers spiritual questions. In other departments, the provision is haphazard and unplanned, although most departments have a policy in their handbooks.



36. The provision for social and moral development is good. The staff has high expectations of the behaviour of pupils in their classrooms so behaviour in classrooms is generally appropriate. There are many opportunities to work in pairs or groups and pupils generally respond well to these. Assemblies make a good contribution, as does the new course in life skills. Staff are good role models for pupils' moral development. A number of pupils had excellent opportunities to reflect on moral issues when they visited a former concentration camp in Poland. In music, pupils are trusted to work at a distance from the main teaching room without constant supervision.
37. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There is good provision for raising awareness of western culture through visits to such places as the United States of America, Italy, Berlin and Prague. Pupils take part in musical and drama productions, such as Grease, and those studying music play in the community. Raising the awareness of pupils of Britain as a multi-cultural society is tackled inconsistently. There are some opportunities in English through the study of literature. In music, pupils are introduced to music from a variety of cultures. Religious education makes a good contribution through the study of world faiths and visits to, for example, a synagogue. There are few books in the library that reflect the diversity of cultures.
38. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in the overall curricular provision. The time given to religious education in Year 10 now enables the course to be taught fully. Grouping arrangements are understood by staff, although there are still large numbers of boys in the lower sets. There is still no systematic provision of religious education in the sixth form. More sixth form courses have been developed.

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

39. Since the last report the school has sustained the good programme for care and support.
40. There are generally sound procedures in place to ensure the safety, security and well-being of the school community. These are complemented by satisfactory arrangements for child protection, which are co-ordinated and managed in a caring, sensitive and knowledgeable way. However, inspection evidence indicates that some members of staff are not aware of the role and responsibilities of the designated teacher. Health and safety policy and practice are secure overall.
41. There is a pastoral support system in place, which is led by the headteacher, senior management team and house co-ordinators. It is well supported by some form tutors. The school has developed clear policies and procedures, which ensure clear guidance for staff and serves as a foundation for good practice. Some of the form tutors work closely to ensure that all pupils and students receive adequate levels of personal support and guidance. The best are proactive (in monitoring the pupils in their care, communicating with parents and target setting), but many are content to pass on much of their responsibility to house co-ordinators. The structure of the pastoral system into houses leads to some inefficiencies and inconsistencies. Responsibilities are not clear or specific enough. The fact that houses contain pupils from Years 9, 10 and 11 means that there is insufficient focus on mentoring and supporting pupils through the coursework and stresses of the GCSE years. Similarly, in Year 9, the house system cannot provide such focused support to guide pupils through the Key Stage 4 options programme as a year system could. The school needs to review the structure of its pastoral system and evaluate the social advantages of houses against the possible advantages of having year teams, who could concentrate exclusively on promoting the attainment and personal development of single year groups, meeting their particular needs at different times in their school lives.
42. The personal and social education (PSE) programme further supports pupils' personal and social development and covers topics that enhance their understanding of issues relating to health, drugs, sex, careers and work experience. This programme enables pupils to make more informed choices, as well to become more responsible members of the school and wider community.
43. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development are just satisfactory, but the monitoring of academic development is not carried out systemically by house co-ordinators and form tutors. The procedures should enable sound levels of information exchange

between members of staff and ensure that good quality information is available to parents. However, the effectiveness of tutors is inconsistent, the information in pupils' planners is not consistently monitored and opportunities to assess daily progress are lost as a result. Some parents are concerned and have expressed this in the parents' questionnaire and OFSTED parents' meeting.

44. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, but the strategies to improve attendance and time keeping are at an embryonic stage. Some strategies for raising attendance are not consistently and rigorously implemented. For example, a significant number of form tutors does not consistently pursue pupil absences or thoroughly investigate the reasons for absence. Poor timekeepers are not rigorously challenged and this adversely affects pupils' learning, progress, and personal development. However, the school has successfully initiated some changes and is reviewing the role of form tutors in order to assist the drive to improve existing attendance levels and ensure more consistent support for house co-ordinators.
45. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and these ensure generally good behaviour in the classroom and sound behaviour in and around the school. However, due to some inconsistent application of rewards and sanctions the code of conduct is not fully observed by a minority of pupils across the school. They continue to display challenging behaviour. However, the headteacher, senior management team, governors and staff are working closely to address the issue of inappropriate behaviour.
46. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are sound. The consistent application of existing strategies, including the use of fixed period exclusions, and the Pastoral Support Room have a positive effect on eliminating aggressive and anti-social behaviour. However, there are no procedures in place to record and monitor racist and sexist incidents. The headteacher and senior management team are seriously committed to the concept and practice of equal opportunities and have assured the inspection team that serious consideration will be given to improving existing arrangements.

### **Assessment**

47. Arrangements for the assessment and recording of pupils' academic progress are satisfactory and the procedures now in place are good, but these are not yet consistently and effectively used. They allow for the assessing and recording every term of pupils' attainment levels in every subject taken. Targets are set based on prior attainment in, for example, National Curriculum tests. The progress of every pupil is carefully monitored to ensure that each boy and girl is on track to meet or exceed the target set in each subject. If there is likely to be a shortfall, mentoring and support is put in place. The system also allows for the progress of whole year groups and of subject departments to be monitored rigorously and regularly. These systems are new, however. They are understood and used effectively in a small number of subjects, particularly mathematics. Elsewhere, although the data exists, there is varying understanding of its usefulness and so it is not yet proving to be effective across the whole school. This is recognised by the senior management team and they established raising achievement managers, whose role is explained later under *Leadership and Management*. There are early signs that this initiative is going to be successful, but, at present, the school has an above average quantity of data about pupils' achievements and progress and is not yet using these effectively enough. Addressing this is a major issue for future development.
48. Marking is conscientiously done in almost all areas and the school policy is that teachers should use marking as an important dialogue between themselves and their pupils to help them to improve their work. Most teachers do this effectively, although there are instances of page after page of written work marked only with ticks. Not all teachers correct spelling and punctuation mistakes and a stricter approach to this is needed if literacy standards are to improve. The school uses the results of tests well to help with the placing of pupils into setted classes. The results of these tests or teacher assessments enable teachers to monitor individual pupils' achievements on a regular basis. Termly progress sheets ensure that pupils are aware of their own strengths and areas for development. These reports are shared with parents. In addition, there are good, detailed, end-of-year reports that meet statutory requirements. These give information for every subject that enables pupils to be self-critical and understand what they need to do to improve.

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

49. The school enjoys a purposeful and constructive dialogue and a relationship based on mutual respect and understanding with parents. Parents have complemented the school's provision and have reported that they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. They are pleased with what the school provides and how the school is led and managed. However, some parents have concerns about the frequency of homework provided, the way the progress of their child is reported and the provision for extra-curricular activity. Inspection evidence indicates that the school provides satisfactory opportunities for homework and that most pupils appreciate the frequency and consistency of homework provided. Pupils' progress is consistently and systematically reported through pupils' annual and interim reports. Reports are clear, concise, make use of user-friendly language and enable the parents to monitor the individual progress and personal development of their children. Opportunities are provided for parents to discuss the contents of reports with subject tutors at parents' evenings. Parents of pupils with special education needs are regularly invited to review meetings to discuss their child's progress and development. These parents value the opportunity and efforts of teachers. Attendance at parents' evenings has fallen and the school is working diligently to improve attendance levels.
50. Inspection evidence also indicates that there is a good range of opportunities for extra-curricular activity and staff work closely with pupils to enhance their learning through the existing provision. The range of out-of-school activities effectively supports pupils' personal and social development.
51. Levels of communication between parents and the school are good. Good quality information celebrating pupils' achievements is regularly reported through the school's newsletter, which is colourful and 'reader-friendly'. The information it contains is useful and purposeful. This is complemented by the school prospectus, which provides new parents with information to enable them to make informed choices about the school provision. The annual report from governors enables parents to keep abreast of important events in the school and community. Both of these documents comply with statutory requirements.
52. Communication between parents and the school is further enhanced by their active participation through the Parent Teachers' Association (PTA), which is an integral part of the school. The association works to ensure that parents support learning in the school, participate in social/cultural events and work closely with the school to improve existing provision. For example, the PTA is consistently involved in fund raising for the school and initiating and developing activities for pupils and parents, as well as serving as a channel of information exchange between parents and the school. The PTA were involved in the review of the arrangements for parents' evenings and changes suggested by parents have been made to improve existing provision.
53. Parents actively support sports events and school performances. At present parents, teachers and pupils are working extremely hard to ensure the success of the next school production. Parents and pupils reported that parents are involved in making costumes and stage management. These arrangements have a positive and constructive impact on standards and support learning, as well as the cultural and social development of the school community.
54. In addition to supporting school activities, parents also support learning in the home. Most parents encourage the active use of information technology and ensure their children complete homework on time. Most parents also monitor their children's progress through the planners and this ensures a close working relationship between the school and home. However, significant numbers of parents are not consistently supporting the school's efforts to improve pupil attendance and time keeping, therefore failing to comply fully with the home/school agreement.
55. Since the last report the school has sustained its positive relationships with parents. Levels of communication continue to be productive and purposeful.

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

56. The last report noted that the leadership and management were effective and purposeful. There was criticism, however, of the lack of detailed costings in the School Development Plan and of the roles and responsibilities of middle managers.
57. There has been satisfactory improvement since then. The school has had a period of temporary headship, for the full year before the present head was appointed. The local authority's intention was to close the school and transfer the pupils to the other secondary school in the town. The new headteacher has had two years, since taking up appointment, to take the school forward. In that time, she has made good progress in giving strong and clear direction to the work of the school. There is now a shared commitment on the part of many teachers and the governors to improve the educational provision in the school and the capacity for the school to improve further in future is good.
58. The quality of leadership is satisfactory overall, with good leadership from the headteacher, very ably supported by the newly appointed deputy. These two senior managers are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is a result of their effective monitoring processes as well as the perceptive analysis of assessment data.
59. Senior members of staff are making increased use of assessment data in order to establish what pupils should be achieving and to assess their progress. There is now a very effective target setting and tracking process in place. Targets are set for every pupil in Key Stage 4, making very good use of previous assessment information, including National Curriculum test results. There are indications that this is beginning to raise the awareness and expectations of teachers. Targets, based on this data, are set for individual pupils, subject departments and class teachers. Their progress towards meeting these targets is monitored regularly. This is an important part of a wider school initiative to promote a culture of achievement, both amongst the pupils and the staff. As a part of this, clear guidance has been established with pupils concerning their behaviour and work rate. The pastoral system and the reporting system are being focused on recording progress and enabling staff to follow up instances of under-achievement effectively.
60. Equality of opportunity for all is an important focus for the senior managers of the school and they are succeeding in offering an education that is broad and inclusive. Sight has not been lost of the small number of pupils who are unlikely to benefit from an academic education. The curriculum is being broadened, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, by the inclusion of vocational courses. In addition, links with the local college and the partner high school usefully extend the range of A level courses available. This range includes minority subjects such as media studies, available for the first time this year through the link with the college. Post 16 links with Leek College, which offers joint provision for one option block, mean that particular A level courses are offered in common across the two institutions, as well as access to certain vocational courses at the college for Leek High School sixth formers. There is a pilot project in Key Stage 4 that offers a mixed course, of vocational courses, work experience and GCSE courses to pupils who have had a poor attendance record and over time have formed poor attitudes to the courses that schools have traditionally offered. This "alternative" programme in Year 11 has established a multi-agency approach involving Youth & Community tutors, the local college and the careers service as well as time in school - and involving the learning support assistants working with pupils both at college and in school. The elements are selected and combined to provide an individual package for each of the students.
61. Senior managers have monitored teaching rigorously and use the outcomes successfully to focus professional development on the improvement of teaching and learning strategies. As reported under *Teaching*, this has improved the quality of teaching throughout the school, so that significantly more teaching is now good, very good or excellent than at the time of the last inspection and there are considerably fewer unsatisfactory lessons. The monitoring has led to useful discussion and sharing of good practice within and across subject departments and this has improved the consistency of teaching throughout the school. There has also been a renewed focus on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Clear guidelines have been drawn for what represents acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The systems for dealing with pupils who disrupt their own learning and that of others have been strengthened and are now used consistently by all staff. This has led to improved behaviour and more positive attitudes from the large majority of pupils, but there is still a number of boys, and a smaller number of girls, whose attitudes to school are negative.

62. The monitoring role of heads of department includes regular lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. It is inconsistently done and the effectiveness of it is uneven. The effectiveness of heads of department, house co-ordinators and senior teachers is mixed. Though some provide dynamic and effective leadership, others have not adapted to the new challenges and responsibilities that the school is rightly placing upon them. Some do not fully understand their accountability or their leadership roles and the level and detail of monitoring, documentation and support for teachers varies across the departments. The middle management tier is very wide, because, in this small secondary school, there is a high proportion of posts of responsibility. This staffing structure is unwieldy, makes communication and decision-making difficult, makes for inconsistency in the way that department documentation and policies are set out and results in very small departments. In some there is only one teacher, sometimes with part-time support, and the monitoring role is unrealistic when the teacher has only him or herself to monitor. The headteacher and the deputy are fully aware of this and a shadow staffing structure has been devised to tackle these issues, both immediately and as vacancies arise. This will also be a key role of the raising achievement managers. This new tier, formed from some established middle managers and some less experienced colleagues, is intended to have a pivotal role in the school. Most are being trained through a joint initiative between the school, the local education authority and Staffordshire University, on a course leading to the award of a certificate/diploma in education management. They will seek to integrate the pastoral and academic provision for pupils, co-ordinate the tracking of pupils' progress to identify and rectify problems and monitor teaching and learning across related subject departments. Although the process is in its infancy, there is evidence of greater awareness of the significance of assessment data and the importance of targets in some subject areas, such as mathematics.
63. Governors are supportive, know the school well and give readily of their time for the benefit of the school. They liaise effectively with the senior management team and have a satisfactory understanding of the complexity of their role and responsibilities. A core group of governors understand these very well and awareness is growing over the body as a whole. They participate in the setting of the school improvement plan as well as the budget, and seek to link the two effectively. The resources committee helps to monitor the budget, and has begun to monitor the effectiveness of major budget decisions. Some of the governors have specific strengths and skills to bring to their work. The monitoring of the curriculum is barely satisfactory and needs to be more thorough.
64. There is a good ethos and a commitment to high achievement in the large majority of lessons. The aims and values of the school are reflected well in its policies, even though some of them are due for revision, and reflect the good work of the previous substantive headteacher.
65. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactorily organised by a senior teacher. He provides effective leadership and ensures coherence in provision through the network of subject co-ordinators.
66. The school complies with all statutory requirements, except that there is still not a daily act of collective worship for all and religious education is not taught sufficiently thoroughly to the sixth form. There has been progress on these issues and the provision has improved since the time of the last report.

#### **Finance**

67. The school budgets systematically for all expenditure. The senior managers and the governing body make funding decisions according to the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan. Budget holders, including heads of department, also seek successfully to use their funding well and with maximum effect. Departments are allocated a maintenance budget on a formula basis. Heads of department also bid annually through their action plans for the finance they need to develop their departments and these bids are judged against the priorities set out in the School Improvement Plan. Governors and all members of staff are involved in the determining of the whole-school priorities, at the time of the drawing up of the School Improvement Plan. Unlike the situation at the time of the last report, this plan is fully and carefully costed. In so far as there is scope for governors to make decisions about how the rest of the budget is spent, they always seek best value in the allocation of contracts and there are many instances of them moving away

from traditional providers of goods and services in order to gain better value. The outcomes of these decisions are regularly reviewed.

68. The school has high staffing costs, mainly resulting from appointments made when the school was larger. There is inefficiency, difficult for the school to tackle, arising from the levels of salary awarded many years ago that are still protected at those levels. This leads to inefficiencies, because the levels of responsibilities being undertaken by staff do not accord always with the amount they are paid. The sixth form provision is uneconomic because, though some sixth form classes are reasonably large, in English and mathematics, for example, others are uneconomically small. Nevertheless, the academic and recruitment advantages of having a sixth form more than outweigh the costs involved.
69. Overall, the quality of educational provision has benefited from the careful management of the budget. Funds have been allocated successfully to areas of educational priority. These areas have been monitored and the decisions have proved to be successful in raising standards and the quality of educational experience for pupils. The resources the school has added to the national funding for information technology have helped to raise standards in that subject area by widening the opportunities for pupils to have access to computers and use them to help their work across the curriculum. The quality and rigour of financial management is sound: the last auditors' report was generally satisfactory and the recommendations it made have been addressed.
70. The school makes effective use of new technology. It is used appropriately for administration and in many subject areas. Special grants, for educating pupils with special educational needs, are used appropriately. Overall, taking account of the progress made by pupils, the quality of teaching, the good personal development of pupils and the relatively high cost per pupil, value for money is satisfactory.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

71. Accommodation in the school is barely satisfactory, overall. The site is attractive and offers a generous amount of space for the numbers of pupils. There is an adequate amount of hard-play space and good access to the large grassed areas, bordered by many species of mature trees that provide some protection from the weather. The site slopes and there are underground streams that make the fields very wet, especially when it rains. This reduces the usefulness of much of the site and means that the outside facilities for physical education are not as effective as they should be.
72. Originally two separate schools, the two main buildings are about 200 metres apart. Walking between them in inclement weather is unpleasant and also delays the start of lessons by up to ten minutes. The buildings are showing signs of age and the long corridors and some dilapidated classrooms do not provide an environment for learning that reflects the needs of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some rooms are particularly in need of refurbishment. The indoor facilities for physical education restrict the range of range of activities that can take place. The two gymnasias are too small and the roofs are too low. The accommodation for religious education is poor and the size of science and English rooms constrains practical work. There is, as commented on by parents, inadequate space for sixth form students to carry out independent study. The display spaces around the school, in classrooms and corridors, are used well to celebrate pupils' artwork. A recent refurbishment of the school canteen to provide an attractive restaurant gives an indication of how the accommodation can be improved and modernised to a high standard.
73. The standard of cleanliness in all areas of the school is satisfactory and there is relatively little litter. The site supervisors and the cleaning staff worked hard during the inspection week to support the teachers in maintaining a difficult building to a reasonable standard.
74. Learning resources are satisfactory. Resources for information and communication technology are good in the school, the central facilities being extensive, with a variety of appropriate software. Information technology is used well overall, including the use of computers for school administration. The library is stocked satisfactorily overall, with a variety of books, including a range of reference books, and computer software.

75. The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers to meet curriculum needs. On the relatively few occasions when teachers are required to work outside of their specialisms, in physical education, for instance, the quality of teaching was found to be occasionally unsatisfactory. The programme of professional development for all staff is thorough and well organised and includes good provision for performance management. The support for newly qualified teachers is generally good. The learning support assistants are appropriately trained and, though relatively few in number, they give good levels of support, as does the clerical and administrative staff. All other adults who work in the school, including the office staff, make a valuable contribution and help to ensure that the work of the school proceeds smoothly.

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

76. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment and the quality of education in the school, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, need to take action in the following areas.
- Seek to achieve a consistently good learning ethos across the school in order to continue to raise levels of achievement at Key Stage 3 and raise attainment at GCSE by:
    - working to improve the attitudes to school and the behaviour of a relatively small number of pupils, mainly boys, who do not always demonstrate the respect, courtesy and consideration to their peers or teachers that the school expects, nor work to their maximum capacity; (Paragraphs 10, 14, 18, 21, 22, 61, 90, 91, 108, 110, 120, 121, 142, 169, 183.)
    - putting into practice consistently across the school, as intended, the procedures for monitoring attainment and progress and the setting of targets, so that teachers and pupils are fully aware of the school's expectations of them and slippage can be quickly identified and addressed; (Paragraphs 21, 43, 47, 59, 62, 97, 126, 145, 152, 162, 172, 205.)
    - recognising where there is relative underachievement from boys in relation to girls at GCSE and seeking to modify courses and teaching and learning strategies in order to reverse this; (Paragraphs 1, 3, 86, 89, 101, 103, 116, 130, 155, 193.)
    - seeking to raise the literacy and oracy levels of pupils from the time they enter the school in order to give them the skills they need to communicate successfully in and out of school, in speech and writing. (Paragraphs 2, 31, 48, 85, 89, 90, 93, 94, 142, 164, 166, 201.)
  - Continue to liaise with parents and carers in order to convince them of the importance to their children of regular attendance at school and work with pupils to ensure that all get to lessons on time. (Paragraphs 7, 13, 54, 99, 130.)
  - Reorganise the staffing, the departmental and pastoral structure of the school, as has been planned, in order to improve communication, the focus on attainment and progress and the monitoring of teaching and learning at middle manager level and ensure that school policies are implemented more consistently and effectively. (Paragraphs 35, 41, 44, 45, 62, 138.)
77. Other areas for development, noted by the inspection team but not picked out as key issues, that the governors may wish to include in their action plan are:
- The need to raise standards of teaching and provision in those subjects, such as German, design and technology, business studies and religious education, where attainment at GCSE has, over time, been lower than average compared with other subjects; (Paragraphs 3, 141, 142, 146, 182, 206.)
  - The need to improve the accommodation (including that for physical education, which is, in terms of the indoor facilities, barely adequate to deliver the curriculum) in order to provide a learning environment that reflects the quality of educational experience the school is striving to achieve; (Paragraphs 71, 72, 204, 212.)

- The need to meet the statutory requirements to hold an act of collective worship for all every day and to teach religious education to students in the sixth form for a reasonable amount of time. (Paragraphs 66, 206.)

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

78. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in mathematics and science at Key Stage 4. In English, their progress at both key stages is good. In other subjects, they make satisfactory progress.
79. Their attitudes to learning are good. They concentrate well in lessons and use the support that they get constructively. In some lessons, pupils with special needs need further encouragement to learn independently and use their initiative, for instance in using dictionaries to master difficult spellings. Their behaviour in class and around the school is respectful to adults and towards each other. They show maturity in their relationships. There is no significant evidence of any discrimination towards pupils with special educational needs and they are fully integrated into the life of the school.
80. In the majority of lessons, when learning support assistants are present, teachers work constructively with them, and there is evidence of jointly planned teaching activities. Learning support assistants (LSA's) are the school's main resource for helping pupils with special needs. They show motivation and commitment in their role. They provide valuable support to pupils with special educational needs and, where appropriate, to other pupils who need help. Classroom management is good and pupils work hard in lessons as a result. In some cases, however, teachers are over-reliant on LSA's for support and fail to provide sufficiently differentiated work for pupils with learning difficulties.
81. Learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to ongoing assessment by keeping detailed records in every lesson of the progress that pupils make and of their attitude and motivation. These records form the basis of valuable and effective subject reviews and reports to parents. Individual education plans (IEP's) are well written, and take full account of stated provision. They also contain short-term targets in separate subjects, which are reviewed half-termly. However, the various subject targets are not co-ordinated so as to be manageable for the individual student.
82. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full range of the curriculum and all other activities enjoyed by pupils generally. Post-sixteen, they progress to courses that are relevant to their needs and provide vital links to the world of work. Careers guidance and opportunities for work experience are particularly strong.
83. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The team of LSA's works effectively to support pupils and the senior LSA ensures coherence in provision through the network of subject co-ordinators. The school works hard to ensure that parents remain fully involved with their children's progress, if necessary through home visits.
84. There has been satisfactory improvement in the provision for educating pupils with special educational needs since the last report and the school is well placed to improve further in future. The focus on raising levels of achievement provides a strong ethos for learning and provides a clear direction for the development of provision.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	137
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16	46	31	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y9 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	443	123
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	52	

#### Special educational needs

	Y9 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	19	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	82	1

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.7
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	95	65	160

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	62	53
	Girls	46	30	22
	Total	103	92	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (62)	58 (57)	47 (46)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (36)	34 (30)	16 (14)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	58	35
	Girls	41	33	21
	Total	98	91	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (52)	57 (76)	35 (31)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	19 (21)	28 (38)	9 (15)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	75	77	152

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	26	71	73
	Girls	45	73	74
	Total	71	144	147
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (43)	95 (95)	97 (96)
	National	46.6 (46.1)	90.9 (87.3)	95.8 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41 (40)
	National	38 (37)

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
	1999	23	31	54

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	12.8	15.5	14.4	1.2	2.0	1.6
National	17.7	18.1	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	0	
	National		82.5

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	563
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	53	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

## ***Teachers and classes***

### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Education support staff: Y9 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	198

### **Deployment of teachers: Y9 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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### **Average teaching group size: Y9 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	22.9

## ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1644451
Total expenditure	1588219
Expenditure per pupil	2777
Balance brought forward from previous year	125839
Balance carried forward to next year	182071

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	566
Number of questionnaires returned	290

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	21	63	10	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	25	57	8	1	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	56	10	2	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	14	58	13	7	8
The teaching is good.	16	66	8	1	10
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	55	12	2	12
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	52	5	2	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	46	4	1	5
The school works closely with parents.	17	56	11	4	12
The school is well led and managed.	21	57	8	2	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	59	7	1	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	51	9	2	20

### **OTHER POINTS MADE BY PARENTS**

At the meeting for parents, there were concerns expressed about the cost of bus fares for sixth form students. The fact that they have to pay means, they believe, that the college, which supplies bus passes, could be seen as a more attractive option to some parents and the inequality is seen as unfair. Linked to this, some parents want the school to market itself more actively in order to recruit as many pupils as possible.

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

### **ENGLISH**

85. When pupils enter the school in Year 9, their attainment is below average and was well below average for year groups entering before 1999. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 and in the national tests in 1999 attained the national average in English.
86. At Key Stage 4 in 1999, the number of A\* to C grades was below average, although all pupils gained A\* to G grades. There were fewer higher grades than there are nationally. Pupils did better in English literature, achieving close to the national average at GCSE in 1999 and more pupils achieved the higher A\* to C grades than nationally. Boys did less well than girls. The performance of boys was below that of boys nationally. In comparison with other subjects taken at GCSE in the school, English literature results compared favourably, but English compared less well.
87. At A-level in 1999, five out of the six pupils who entered the examination attained A and B grades, a creditable result. The numbers taking the subject were too small to make valid comparison with national data.
88. In 2000, provisional results for GCSE show a decline from last year and again, although more boys gained A\* to C grades than last year, they did less well than girls. There were many more boys in the year group than in the previous year and a small number did not see the importance of coming to school after their mock examinations. These were two factors accounting for the decline in results. There are no results available currently from the tests at Key Stage 3, because the school has, appropriately, challenged the results. Figures from assessment done by teachers indicate a similar performance to last year. Results at A-level were again highly creditable with twelve of the fifteen candidates gaining A to C grades, and six of those achieving an A grade. National figures are not yet available to make any comparison.
89. The inspection found that attainment is similar to that of last year. At Key Stage 3, attainment on entry has improved, although it is still below average, and attainment is likely to be broadly similar to the national average by the end of the key stage. At Key Stage 4, there are significantly more boys than girls and attainment is below average. Boys were observed to be far less confident than girls in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Lower attaining pupils achieve well because they are taught effectively. Teachers know their pupils well and ensure that the work is matched appropriately to their needs. Learning support assistants are effective in helping pupils to understand what they are doing and to extend their learning. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress, but they are not always suitably challenged in classes that cater for pupils with a wide range of attainment. However, they are supported well in Year 9 by the enrichment activity that is run specifically for high attainers. Pupils in the sixth form make good progress as the teaching challenges them and extends their ideas.
90. A few pupils at all key stages are articulate and have a wide vocabulary that they use well to put forward their ideas. By the end of Key Stage 4, these pupils are confident to join in discussion and to ask questions. Many pupils however, particularly boys, are passive and content to respond briefly. They do not have a wide vocabulary and often respond inappropriately in non-Standard English. In the best lessons, teachers encourage them to extend their answers by questions, but this does not happen consistently. In the sixth form, most students are active speakers and listeners and in one lesson had the confidence to challenge the teacher and present a different argument.
91. By the end of Key Stage 3, many pupils use dictionaries and other sources of reference well. Many read fluently and with good expression. A Year 9 class, reading a play by Alan Ayckbourn, was greatly amused by the humour and a few were able to reflect this in their reading. By the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils have good skills of critical analysis and can find extracts in the texts to justify their point of view. In a Year 10 lesson, most pupils, including boys, confidently used the internet to seek information and present it in a form that became a reference source for other pupils. Boys are less confident than girls and achieve less well. In the sixth form, many

pupils understand how authors use literary techniques to convey ideas, impressions and feelings and they use specialist terms confidently when analysing texts.

92. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 write fluently, using a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas precisely. A few pupils in Year 9 wrote witty poems based on Steve Turner's *Daily London Recipe*. They captured humour through a good choice of vocabulary. In another context, one pupil in Year 9 wrote,

*The way through the woods*

*The soft breeze blows through the trees,  
Forest floor earthy and warm,  
The gentle mumble of horses' feet  
Birds hiding in frightened swarms.*

93. At Key Stage 4, many pupils write in a wide range of styles and adapt their writing for the audience who will be reading it. However, many pupils, particularly boys, do not make an appropriate choice of vocabulary, so their writing is often forced. They also make many errors of spelling and grammar and use slang inappropriately. The quality of the presentation of written work by girls is usually better than that of boys. In the sixth form, most students write fluently in a well-structured style. There is still some use of colloquial English and misuse of punctuation marks, such as the apostrophe.
94. The weaknesses in speaking and writing, particularly of boys, impedes their access to higher grades at GCSE in some subjects, for example, business studies and history. All departments have written policies for literacy, and the English department has supported the work in literacy by providing work that can be done in tutorials. The implementation of the policies is inconsistent across departments. The science department teaches the vocabulary needed for the subject and has useful word lists pinned in laboratories. Modern foreign language teachers insist on pupils writing extended pieces. Otherwise, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of literacy needed for subjects across the curriculum, such as the use of appropriate styles of writing for different tasks.
95. In classrooms, pupils behave very well and have satisfactory attitudes towards the subject. They listen well, especially when their classmates are speaking and when pressed, they are able to respond. Rarely is there spontaneous discussion or pupils asking questions. However, in groups, pupils co-operate successfully. In one Year 11 class, pupils worked well in groups on questions about a text and then shared their ideas with the class in a group presentation. The teacher's high expectations of their work enabled this to happen. Pupils are supportive of one another. They are taught to be independent and so they use a dictionary and a thesaurus when they need them. There is a contrast between the attitudes of pupils in Year 9, who can take a long time to settle and are slow to respond to the expectations of the teacher, and the rest of the school. In Years 10 and 11, although pupils are passive, they work hard and respect the ethos of the classroom, which demands good behaviour and a readiness to work. This is a tribute to the staff in the department, all of whom have high expectations of good behaviour.
96. The quality of teaching is good. All of the teaching is at least satisfactory, with 86 per cent good and 36 per cent very good. In addition to the qualities above, all specialist teachers have a very good understanding of the subject, which they use well to move the pupils' learning forward. The non-specialist staff complements the department well and teach effectively. In the very best lessons, the aims of the lesson are clear and shared with the pupils, who therefore know exactly what is expected of them. The planning is detailed and includes how activities will meet the need of the wide range of attainment in the group. These two features are not always consistent across the department.
97. Homework is set regularly and extends the learning of the pupils. Teachers are assiduous in their marking of it and in ensuring that it is completed by the pupils. The comments about the work do not always give a clear idea about how pupils may improve the work. The department has a most useful marking sheet which is used to set targets for the pupils. This is not always used by all staff, but the department is exploring ways in which these sheets can be used to set targets

using the very detailed data about pupils' performance which has been collected. The department has worked hard to put this together.

98. Often, pupils receive good feedback in class about their work. In a sixth form lesson in which Year 12 pupils were preparing to resit GCSE English, the teacher gave very effective feedback about their writing which clearly indicated how it could be improved. Teachers often question pupils in connection with this. A Year 11 lower attaining class studying *Unrelated Incident* by Tom Leonard achieved highly in relation to their prior attainment, because the teacher used questions effectively and ensured that every member of the class contributed. As a result, all were able to translate the poem from Scottish dialect into standard English. This was also a good example of interaction with pupils that increased their understanding. In another example, from a Year 11 class studying *Superman and Paula Brown's New Suit*, the teacher interacted well with pupils to move their learning forward. Here again, pupils co-operated well in pairs when working on questions and then shared their learning with the class. They also were encouraged to research independently. These good skills of interaction are used to help pupils on an individual basis, but rarely do teachers plan to spend this quality time for a long period with a group in order to focus on a specific need that the group may have.
99. Time is used well in lessons and the range of activities helps to maintain the interest of the class. However, pupils are frequently late to lessons and as much as ten minutes can be lost, as pupils have to move between sites. All teachers have good methods of dealing with this, but it means a prompt and purposeful start to the lessons is not always possible.
100. The department is competently led and, as in the last inspection, the fact that all the teachers hold other responsibilities outside of the department makes meeting together difficult. However, there is a range of formal and informal systems for communication and time has recently been made available at staff meetings for the department to meet together to focus on the raising of standards. Members of staff have considered how to raise the achievement of boys in the past and given the increase in boys' underachievement, this needs to be a focus for the department. The inconsistencies in practice across the department, although minor, need to be tackled as part of a rigorous and consistent approach to raising attainment further. The department has plans to create an ethos of a department, which is currently missing, by using the opportunity of refurbishment to create an interesting display about the department in the corridor.
101. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection. Teaching is now good overall and the use of information and communication technology has improved. Attainment until recently has been close to average and the sixth form performs well. However, boys still underachieve significantly. The scheme of work has improved, but needs to be made accessible to any non-specialist teacher.

## **MATHEMATICS**

102. Attainment in mathematics is average at the end of Key Stage 3. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment has been consistently in line with the national average for several years. In 1999, 58 per cent of pupils gained level 5 and 34 per cent gained level 6 and above, both of which were close to the national averages, but were well below the average for similar schools. Provisional test results for 2000 indicate significant improvement, with 71 per cent of all pupils achieving level 5 including 41 per cent who achieved level 6+.
103. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in mathematics is below the national average. In 1999, 41 per cent of pupils gained a GCSE grade of A\* - C in mathematics. GCSE results are also below the average when compared with similar schools. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' at the end of Key Stage 4. Provisional results for 2000, show a further drop in the percentage of pupils' gaining higher grades A\*-C from 41 per cent in 1999 to 38 percent in 2000. By the end of Key Stage 4, almost all pupils with special educational needs achieve an A\*- G grade in GCSE and their average grade in mathematics is between a D and an E. Girls, at the end of Key Stage 3, do not achieve as well in mathematics as boys, against the national trend. Girls' attainment, however, is higher than that of boys at Key Stage 4. Mathematics results compare favourably with those in science at Key Stage 3, but pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is lower in



mathematics than in science. Over 1999 and 2000, the number of candidates for A-level mathematics has been small. Attainment in mathematics at A level was below the national average in 1999. The provisional results for 2000 indicate that all six students achieved A-D grades and three candidates obtained grades A and B, which is in line with the national average.

104. Inspection evidence indicates that, by the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment is average overall. However, in some lessons, pupils achieve levels above national expectations. They show good understanding across all attainment targets. Pupils' number skills are very good, and they have quick mental recall. They have good mathematical data-handling skills and are very numerate when calculating figures. Their algebraic skills are strong and their understanding of shape and space is good. Higher attaining pupils show good, and sometimes very good, levels of attainment. The level of attainment of pupils on entry has increased over the past three years. The current Year 9 has a much higher proportion of higher attaining pupils than in previous years. These pupils are already achieving levels above national expectations. For example in a sharply focused lesson on circle measurements, pupils used new words and ideas confidently and with understanding to solve challenging problems. Some high attaining pupils display good skills in gathering information, constructing tables and graphs and interpreting them. They quickly recognise patterns and are able to apply these skills from two-dimensional to three-dimensional work. Lower attaining Year 9 pupils are able to add and subtract decimals accurately. They can draw and interpret linear graphs and bar and pie charts and have good understanding of statistical concepts such as mean, mode, median. However, they are less secure in the understanding of other mathematical concepts.
105. Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, because of the high proportion of pupils in this year's Year 11 with special needs, is below average. Some high attaining pupils in particular demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding across all attainment targets. They also show good understanding of mathematical ideas, such as probability and indices. Pupils' attainment in Year 10 is in line with the national average and some pupils are achieving above average standards. They show competence in a full range of mathematical topics, including measurement and calculation of areas and volume and work based on number patterns and algebra. Pupils display a good grasp of algebra and can analyse statistical data competently. Average and low attaining pupils in Year 11 have difficulties with some of the language and in recalling previous work. Their work is often not underpinned by sound understanding and some pupils have difficulty in recalling mathematical ideas studied previously and show limited skills in using and applying mathematics. Their problem solving skills are underdeveloped. The lower attaining pupils working on conversion graphs failed to understand appropriate scales and units and their grasp of statistical concepts is weak.
106. Standards are average in the sixth form and most students are proficient in applying knowledge well to advanced problem solving. Learning in the sixth form displays a good level of research and investigative work and the skills of problem solving in a range of contexts. Most A-level students show a good grasp of mathematical concepts, which they apply to solve complex problems in algebra, trigonometry, coordinate geometry and applied mechanics.
107. Pupils make some use of numeracy in a few subjects apart from mathematics, but pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum are weak. Science provides an appropriate context for pupils to apply their number skills. There was some evidence that pupils can use and apply mathematics with reasonable competence in investigations and problem solving. In other lessons, pupils use measuring skills appropriately in subjects such as physical education, geography and design and technology. Most A-level students successfully manipulate formulae, perform calculations and interpret a variety of graphs confidently. Some younger pupils, in both key stages, use line graphs, frequency curves, bar charts and pie charts competently.
108. In almost all lessons pupils have a good attitude to their work. This has a positive impact on the quality of their attainment and progress. Most show good levels of concentration. Low attaining pupils are capable of sustained concentration, when, for example drawing and interpreting conversion and scatter graphs. Most take pride in their work, which is neat and well presented. However, a minority of boys have a poor attitude and work in their books is careless and untidy. Most pupils have respect for adults and property. Pupils' performance had declined significantly over the last two years as a result of staffing difficulties. Temporary supply teachers taught some classes and over this difficult period, pupils' attitudes to work changed, which affected adversely

their approach to completing assignments. Some poor behaviour habits persist and there was some evidence of this in a few Year 11 lessons. A-level students respond well to the increased challenge and independent learning and show flexibility in their approach to mathematical work. They were seen using information and technology communication skills competently to solve complex problems involving trigonometrical functions.

109. At both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form teaching is good overall. All teachers of mathematics have very good subject knowledge, which ensures that pupils at each key stage have access to the mathematical skills required for the examinations. Relationships are good in most lessons and this not only encourages pupils' co-operation and concentration, but also increases their confidence in asking questions to clarify their understanding. In a few lessons teachers provide extensive individual support to pupils, either to help in case of difficulties or to take the talented further, but more generally high attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Pupils' understanding is promoted particularly effectively by means of practical and investigative activities based on real life situations. In some lessons, teachers actively encourage the pupils' language development. In a Year 9 lesson where good oral work helped pupils to distinguish circumference and area measurement and the emphasis on the literal meaning of mathematical concepts helped pupils to recognise number patterns and raise spatial awareness. Consideration of projectiles in real situations encouraged understanding in a Year 13 mechanics lesson. However, in some lessons, the context and meanings of mathematical concepts are not discussed in sufficient detail. Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' common mistakes, enabling pupils to avoid common pitfalls. Content is well planned in most lessons but some lessons lack a variety of learning and assessment activities to allow for pupils' different modes of learning. Teachers make insufficient use of information technology to enhance pupils' learning in mathematics. Pupils' work is marked regularly. There is appropriate written feedback to help pupils make progress. They benefit from the departmental consistency in both marking and the recording of their progress as a result of the thorough monitoring of departmental practice. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and set appropriate homework to encourage progress further. Teachers' assessments are supplemented by pupils' self-assessments and by negotiated target setting at the end of the termly tests. However, the reporting of pupils' progress to parents is not always sufficiently informative of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.
110. The new management of the department is highly effective and shows initiative and drive. The head of department has analysed a number of the department's developmental needs and established key priorities for action, thereby ensuring that changes take place at a reasonable pace. Departmental meetings provide helpful opportunities for developing shared strategies for effective planning. Since her appointment, the staff has focused, rightly, on improving the quality of teaching, monitoring pupils' progress and raising pupils' attainment. The head of the department spends considerable time and effort in analysing public examination results to evaluate the comparative value added between key stages. She monitors classroom practice conscientiously, checking planning and preparation and monitoring pupils' books and files. A range of strategies is being developed progressively and applied and monitored consistently. Measurable targets have been set. Both of the other full-time mathematics teachers are new to the school, are suitably qualified, hard-working and deployed efficiently to reflect their strengths.
111. The curriculum in mathematics has good breadth and balance at all key stages and is enhanced by work in practical applications. Schemes of work provide appropriate information for the teaching of the National Curriculum. Students with special educational needs are well supported and as a result they make good gains in knowledge, understanding and mathematical skills. Resources are well used to support teaching and learning and materials and the dispersed accommodation is used efficiently and enhanced by fine displays of mathematical posters and pupils' work. The computers are used occasionally, but the use of information technology is underdeveloped. There are strong curricular links with the feeder middle school. The mathematics teachers of both schools meet frequently to develop agreed schemes of work, along with policies and practices for assessment and joint approaches to build on pupils' strengths and weaknesses. There are well-managed initiatives and innovative projects that are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The mathematics department collaborates effectively with the feeder middle school to organise a 'mathematics challenge' for pupils in Years 8 and 9. Extra-curricular activities, such as the intermediate mathematics challenge and well-planned visits to supermarkets and banks, are provided for pupils to stimulate enjoyment of the subject and to further develop their mathematical skills.

112. There has been some progress since the last inspection, though staffing problems have impeded developments. Over the last twelve months, under the new leadership, the pace of change has gathered momentum. The department has developed systems that allow a more rigorous scrutiny of pupils' attainment and progress. New schemes of work are in place; problem solving and investigational work is developing along with rigorous tracking of pupils' progress; staff are beginning to use information technology to enhance lessons and some teachers are using a range of teaching and learning strategies. In order to improve further the quality of attainment and progress, the department needs to challenge underachievement amongst Year 11 pupils; develop long-term plans to incorporate the use of information and communication technology in the teaching and learning; and provide varied and imaginative tasks to challenge high attaining pupils. At a whole-school level, there is a need to develop a whole-school numeracy policy.

## SCIENCE

113. Data from the middle school shows that attainment from Key Stage 2 is currently below average, but that it will improve over the next 5 years. Over the last 4 years, Key Stage 3 performance has been below national standards and attainment in 1999 was well below that of similar schools. However, 2000 results are above the 1999 national averages. Girls' attainment is below that of boys. Science attainment is below that of English and mathematics.
114. In 1999, overall GCSE attainment for boys and girls at the higher grades, A\* - C, was above that nationally. Girls' attainment was just above that nationally. Relative to other subjects in the school, girls perform slightly better in science. Boys perform just in line with results nationally for boys and, compared to other subjects in the school, boys perform better in science than any other subject. Compared to other subjects in the school science attainment is good, better than in English and mathematics.
115. In the sixth form, biology and chemistry students achieve more highly than those studying physics. Biology has above national average A and B grade percentages. Small sixth form numbers, however, can affect the validity of any comparison of results - biology has more students than the other subjects, for example.
116. Attainment at Key Stage 3 has been below average in recent years. Progress from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is good, because attainment is raised from below to above that nationally, with girls making greater improvement than boys.
117. The finding of the inspection is that attainment is currently average at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, standards of work are mostly satisfactory with some weaknesses. For example, in lower attaining groups, whilst some pupils can understand the term vertebrate, girls show very poor recall of animal groups and confused spiders with insects. Boys found difficulty in naming examples of amphibians. Pupils recalled photosynthesis, the importance of light and chlorophyll and that it made glucose and oxygen, but omitted carbon dioxide as an essential component. Able pupils are fluent in their use of the scientific terminology of reflection and refraction.
118. At Key Stage 4, more able pupils can recount the kinetic theory of matter and apply this to melting. Others can explain solids, liquids and gases at particle level, but identify the conversion of liquid to gas as condensation. Some pupils find difficulty in recalling the kinetic theory of matter and its significance in connection with particle size, rate of reaction and the effect of temperature. Amongst lower attaining pupils, diffusion cannot be recalled or explained. Some pupils are aware of evaporation but not the composition of water vapour. Familiarity with experimental procedures is unsatisfactory, pupils cannot correctly explain the use of a measuring cylinder, make poor use of timing procedures and show a lack of awareness of the effect of local heating when measuring temperatures. Some girls believe oxygen to be a product of animal respiration. Others can explain photosynthesis, but not link it to respiration. Some boys show confused understanding of photosynthesis. More able boys and girls can explain the electronic configuration of atoms and the content of the nucleus. Boys show a better command of the periodic table than girls. Able pupils readily explain the principle of increasing reactivity down the

groups of the periodic table. Pupils show facility with the use of the names and symbols of components in simple circuits and can readily discuss lines of best fit and gradients on graphs. They demonstrate good conceptual understanding of the relationship between particles in a wire, current flow, resistance and heat production.

119. In the sixth form, students can easily carry out calculations involving moles in chemistry and follow transposition of formulae in thermal physics. Pupils know the phases of mitosis in biology.
120. Teaching is good overall. All teaching at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory or better and some very good teaching was seen. At Key Stage 4, the majority of teaching was satisfactory or better. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, new and inexperienced members of staff were working hard to control challenging groups of older pupils. In the sixth form, the majority of lessons showed good teaching, but again some unsatisfactory teaching was observed from inexperienced teachers. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour reflect the quality of the teaching. Standards of behaviour in lessons and the attitudes shown by pupils are generally good. Pupils show interest in their work and cooperate with their teachers when the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better. On the rare occasions where unsatisfactory behaviour occurs, this is more evident among boys than girls. In the majority of lessons, pupils demonstrate good organisation and positive attitudes.
121. In Key Stage 3, where teaching is good, lessons are well planned and resources are readily available. Good use of questions and answers involves pupils in the lesson. Novel approaches to teaching and learning are used - for example, using the floor as a drawing area and involving pupils actively in the lesson as model particles. A wide range of learning activities are employed, such as demonstration, teacher exposition, probing questions, work from the overhead projector, written work and drawing. Textbooks are used to support learning. In some lessons, where teaching is satisfactory overall but there are occasional weaknesses, more thought needs to be given to logical presentation and more appropriate resources need to be chosen to help understanding and learning. There is a need to find strategies to involve boys more productively in the lessons.
122. In Key Stage 4, where teaching is good, recapitulation of the work from the previous lesson consolidates learning. The plan of the lesson is outlined to pupils to enable them to visualise how their learning is to progress. Good use is made of class discussion to obtain answers, this allows pupils to contribute to the lesson and to their learning. Lesson materials are adapted to meet the identified needs of pupils enabling the lesson to progress successfully. A range of teaching and learning strategies is employed. There is evidence of the teachers' concern to ensure pupils understand the concepts being taught in lessons. The physical challenge of some activities gives boys the opportunity to learn in an appropriate way. Demonstrations are well paced and safe. Where teaching is less satisfactory, pupil understanding of basic concepts is not established initially. For example, in a lesson based on the kinetic theory, pupils' failure to grasp this concept led to difficulties and ineffective learning during subsequent parts of the lesson.
123. In the sixth form, where teaching is good, there is clear, logical presentation at a sensible pace following the lesson plan. Good use is made of questions and answers and good use made of oral and mental arithmetic. The work is appropriately challenging. On rare occasions, there is a lack of appropriate stimulus material, delivery is protracted and, in places, factually incomplete or inaccurate.
124. The curriculum meets statutory requirements for all years and is enriched by means of visits and a range of extra-curricular activities. The degree of curriculum co-ordination between the middle school and high school is improving and this is likely to have a positive effect on standards when the new jointly planned schemes are fully implemented. There are clear literacy and numeracy policies and evidence of these in action was seen during the inspection.
125. Provision for and the progress of pupils with special educational need are sound.
126. The department uses a range of assessment strategies and is building up a bank of data on pupil achievement. This is used currently for terminal grades, grouping and target setting. However, more effective use could be made of this on a day-to-day basis to support learning. Marking

across the department is mostly in line with school policy, but the use of comments is inconsistent. There is a need for greater use of comments to explain how to improve.

127. The department is well managed. There are policies in place to seek to raise standards. There are weaknesses, however, in the monitoring of the work of the department, although this is improving. Classroom monitoring began in April 2000, the science department being the first to start.
128. The last inspection identified as issues for action: few pupils gaining A and A\* grades; work presented not being matched to pupil needs; inappropriate teaching methods; the amount and deployment of technical support needing review; a lack of effective monitoring of the work of the department; the need to monitor the quality of education and a need to meet needs of more able pupils. The position now is that the 1999/2000 results show girls with marginally more A\* and A grades than boys – an improvement. Efforts have been made to provide materials to meet pupil needs, but there is still room to take this further. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
129. Many useful policies are in place, but there is a need to monitor policies in action more effectively in the work of the department. There is monitoring of examination results and use is beginning to be made of this data.
130. To improve, there should be more widespread use of collected data for day-to-day planning of teaching, greater attention to punctuality from pupils and attention given to teaching and learning strategies, especially for boys, and the sharing of good practice in the school.

## **ART**

131. GCSE results are below national levels, with 44 per cent of pupils achieving A\* - C grades in 1999, against a national figure of 61 per cent. One quarter of both the boys and girls missed the A\* - C level, attaining level D. The provisional results for 2000, however, indicate a considerable improvement in achievement, 53 per cent of the pupils entered gaining grades between A\* and C. The small, but growing, number of students entered for A-level examinations also achieved results below national expectations. Here, too, figures for 2000 show a significant improvement.
132. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is at the national expectation. The evidence from previously completed work indicates that pupils reach a good standard of practical skills and are able to use their skills to produce good quality artistic outcomes. The art lessons observed during the inspection revealed a much wider variation in pupil attainment. Whereas some Year 9 pupils can confidently develop and prepare high quality stained glass window stencils, inspired by the work of the Art Nouveau movement, others in the same year have difficulty in cutting out and pasting. Pupils' sketchbooks mirror this same variation, both in the quality and quantity of their contents. There were some good examples of pupils using appropriate artistic vocabulary, but there is reluctance amongst some pupils to answer questions in class. Close links and a shared scheme of work with the feeder middle school support progress across the key stage. Pupils build up a good knowledge of the key concepts of art, such as line, tone and composition through a wide selection of two-dimensional and some three-dimensional projects. They have some knowledge of artists and art history, although this does not extend into the cultures behind many of the ancient non-western movements. Pupils can also explore and develop their ideas. They are less good at evaluating their work.
133. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been below national expectations for pupils aged sixteen. Lessons observed and completed work seen, however, would indicate that current groups are attaining standards in line with national expectations. There is a significant minority of very able pupils in each group, who are likely to be above average overall at the end of the key stage. Building upon the positive Key Stage 3 experiences, many pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to display high levels of skill in the control and use of paint. For example, pupils in a Year 11 class were completing sophisticated self-portraits using a single colour of paint to good effect. Higher achieving pupils are successfully extending their skills in investigation and preparation work for their major projects. One girl, for example, had prepared a very professional series of

studies in colour, line and texture, together with useful notes, following a personal expedition to the Peak District. Another pupil had researched the world of 'fairground lettering' in preparation for her work. All pupils explore a variety of media in response to their assignments. A number of successful sculptures in wire and plaster are nearing completion, inspired by the work of Salvador Dali and the Surrealist Movement. Pupils increase their practical skills and subject knowledge across the key stage. They become proficient in all aspects of their examination syllabus, knowing what they are doing and why. Small numbers of pupils, however, are less certain about how well they are doing, or exactly what to do next to improve.

134. Attainment in the sixth form is improving. Almost all the lessons observed and the completed work seen indicate standards to be in line with national levels. Students display a growing confidence in their work, revealed in the desire to move towards larger scale work, and their eagerness to experiment with mixed media. One student, for example, has almost completed a large oil painting and tissue paper relief, initially inspired by a Leonardo Da Vinci painting. Students can discuss their work and their personal feelings about art.
135. Attitudes to the subject are good. At Key Stage 4, a larger than average proportion of the year group chooses to enrol for the GCSE course. Numbers are also growing at sixth form level. Pupils enjoy work in art and respond with very positive attitudes. For the most part, behaviour is good and pupils are generally polite and considerate. They co-operate well when asked to share equipment and at the end of lessons when tidying up.
136. Teaching is always satisfactory and occasionally good at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4 and sixth form level, it is always good and frequently very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, understanding and high level of artistic skill. They set high expectations, stressing accuracy, technique and presentation, to which pupils respond well. Even the unfinished work in some pupil folders is clearly not abandoned; a concept not shared in many schools. Programmes of work are devised to cover National Curriculum and examination requirements. They are well planned to stimulate and develop creative growth and practical expertise. Although objectives are not always shared with the class, lessons are frequently challenging and, at best, inspire pupils to be highly motivated. With this ability, combined with their practical skills in pupil management, teachers are able to engender a relaxed but businesslike atmosphere in the best classes. Pupils are able to concentrate for long periods of time, often in complete silence. Individual support coupled with a lot of practical advice maintains the climate for learning. Where teaching is less successful, pupils are policed rather than taught, resulting in a strained atmosphere where pupils behave, but mistakes are not always picked up promptly.
137. Day-to-day assessment is good, but longer-term assessment and target setting is not yet sufficiently developed to provide a reliable standard against which to measure progress.
138. Leadership and management of the department are sound. Staff development is satisfactory, but consists mainly of responding to available published courses, within the funding and time constraints set out by the school. However, when the need arises, other support is found. For example, visits are currently being arranged for a teacher to see good practice in neighbouring schools. The small department provides well for its pupils although its size is both a strength and a weakness. The strength is that the two teachers work well together. The weakness is that the department relies too heavily on casual and informal 'systems', both for internal matters and in its relationship with senior management. Meetings are infrequent and minutes unhelpful in recording decisions made, action required, time scale for events, criteria for success and ultimate responsibility. Development planning too lacks clarity and rigour. As a result the laudable aims included in the current plan may well be destined to become little more than a 'wish list', as other issues compete to take the limited time available for planning and implementation.
139. Accommodation is adequate and forms an attractive environment for creative work. Displays in the rooms, along corridors and in the reception area testify to the quality of examination work and the Year 9 enrichment days.
140. Since the last inspection report, there has been satisfactory improvement. The quality of teaching has improved at Key Stage 4 and at sixth form levels, even though the level of attainment, because of the different nature of the cohorts, dipped in 1999. Many of the high standards identified in the report have been maintained, although the absence of information and

communication technology has yet to be addressed. Problems with the storage of work have been overcome.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

141. Attainment at GCSE was well below average in 1999, and provisional results for 2000 are similar. A number of GCSE pupils lost motivation and did not complete their coursework. The number of pupils taking the subject at A-level is too small to make valid comparisons with national data.
142. The inspection found attainment to be well below average. One of the reasons is the poor literacy skills of many of the pupils, particularly boys. This prevents them from expressing their ideas clearly in writing, but this is also a problem for other subject departments, who attain better results with the same pupils. Large numbers of pupils are allowed to be passive in lessons, and, although they know the answers, do not respond and are reluctant to discuss and, therefore, to extend their ideas. However, many pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 understand basic principles of what motivates a workforce and the need to have workers who enjoy their work in order to ensure efficient production of products. Pupils develop a knowledge of a range of theories about what motivates people to work and a small number understand what motivates them personally and can relate this to a particular theory. Higher attainers do not make the progress they should as the work is insufficiently challenging for them. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as they receive appropriate support from learning support assistants.
143. Although pupils are passive, they behave well in lessons because the teacher has sound methods for managing behaviour. Most listen courteously to one another and to the teacher and they sustain work well. Some boys are less well motivated than the girls. Pupils respond well to the teacher, who respects their views. Relationships are good. However, the teacher is not rigorous enough in ensuring that pupils take pride in their work and so written work is sometimes poorly presented.
144. Teaching is just satisfactory overall, but it has some good features. One example was during a revision test at the beginning of the lesson, when, through probing questions, the teacher developed pupils' initial brief response into a detailed one that covered all the points necessary to gain an A grade. The teacher then congratulated them and ensured that they knew that their answer had moved from a C grade to an A grade. Objectives are written on the board so that pupils know what is expected of them. Sometimes however, the objectives are a list of activities rather than what pupils are expected to achieve in the lesson. Good methods are employed to encourage skills of literacy, such as when pupils were asked to listen to an explanation and then make their own notes, but this instruction was not followed. A few did as they were asked, but the majority copied from the overhead transparency. Work tends to be set at the same level for all pupils and, at times, lower attaining pupils need more support and higher attaining pupils could do more. Rigour and pace are missing from lessons. Pupils are not challenged sufficiently and expectations of them are too low. Lesson planning is satisfactory, but lessons are not always thoroughly prepared.
145. The scheme of work is being developed to give useful guidance for planning lessons. It contains much useful information, but some areas have little detail, such as criteria for assessing when pupils have achieved the aim of a lesson or series of lessons. As a result, assessment is not always used to ensure that pupils make the progress they should. Marking often consists of ticks and does not give pupils information as to how they might improve their work. In order to improve provision and raise standards, there needs to be significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The teaching needs to focus much more clearly on the main lesson objectives. Lessons need to be conducted at a better pace and the planning needs to be more rigorous, taking into account the full range of abilities and needs in the classes. Expectations must be raised and all pupils challenged and involved throughout every lesson.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

146. A-level results in 1999 were slightly above those for similar schools and 86 per cent of those who sat the examination passed. In GNVQ intermediate health and social care and GNVQ intermediate manufacturing, well over half of those who entered gained full awards, and all but one pupil gained part awards. These vocational courses contribute strongly to the achievements of post-16 pupils in the department. At Key Stage 4, results in comparison with similar schools and most other departments in the school are low. Only 33.3 per cent of pupils achieved A\*-C grades in 1999 and standards appear to have fallen since the last report. Contributory subject performance varies. Results for child development and graphic products have risen between 1998 and 1999 and are above national averages. Results for food technology were below average, as were those for systems and control (which fell significantly), while those in resistant materials have continued to be very low.
147. The work seen at Key Stage 3 shows that, by the end of the key stage, standards match national expectations and attainment in the wide range of contributory areas taught is satisfactory. Pupils can work safely, develop skills with a range of equipment, and make a range of products, such as automata and a healthy meal for a teenager. In computer control, they understand flow charts; model a real life sequence to control a pelican crossing and process input signals. Design skills are underdeveloped. At the start of their course, there is an emphasis on skills acquisition, but pupils are not challenged, for instance, to consider the needs of users or nutritional information. Teacher assessment for Key Stage 3 is high in relation to levels in core subjects.
148. By the end of Key Stage 4, the standard of pupils' work observed is largely in keeping with national expectations over the department as a whole and attainment seen in lessons is satisfactory. However, the standard of project folder work, and its completion, varies across the department. In food technology, more able pupils make an analysis of questionnaire data in research, discuss nutritional issues related to their designs and plan the making process. Some work, particularly in graphic products, is finished to a high standard, as are project folders. In resistant materials, pupils' use of materials is appropriate and they manufacture a variety of products, such as furniture, trailers and a wind-vane, to satisfactory standards. The quality of project folder work in this aspect of the subject and its presentation is, however, poor - some sections remaining unfinished and having superficial testing and evaluation. Design sketches, except in graphic products, fail to incorporate basic drawing techniques that would enhance the clarity and communication of ideas, although teachers are attempting, in Year 10, to address this issue. In systems and control, pupils can model circuits and are starting to master the complexities of printed circuit board design with appropriate software. They have been taught, but do not always understand, the theory and calculations of circuit design. Pupils have a good understanding of the design process.
149. In current A-level work, standards are in line with or above national expectations. Pupils following a vocational City and Guilds course are following a course appropriate to their needs and understand the constraints of the real world of work. Many are developing high levels of skill. Those following the Health and Social Care GNVQ programme carry out detailed research into a range of topics, such as 'safety in the child's environment'. They are able to quote appropriate statistics in their subsequent, in-depth writing. In product design, pupils are challenged at an appropriate rate and able pupils have developed high levels of ICT skills in the presentation of their research.
150. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils' learning is satisfactory across all the subject disciplines. Pupils make simple changes to recipes, investigate and compare products such as pastry types and work safely. They respond well to work that is challenging and can, for instance, identify the components of a detailed control sequence in the correct order. They are keen to learn. They try out ideas for themselves and are sometimes genuinely surprised by the results. By Key Stage 4, most pupils are self-motivated and their understanding of the design process is good. In D&T graphic products, pupils learn about design issues through interesting debates. Pupils can apply their prior learning and ICT skills to their work when challenged to do so. By the end of the key stage, pupils in D&T food technology use analytical methods well, work with an understanding of nutrition and organise their project folders into a logical sequence. Pupils have had the opportunity to experience the batch production of products. In the sixth form, pupils utilise their intellectual and creative skills and know what they have to do to improve and succeed. In general, where learning is effective, work is related to real examples where pupils engage in practical activities,



and they are given the opportunity to interact with each other and teachers in debate. This has improved since the last inspection.

151. The overall quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 is satisfactory, with some strengths, particularly at A-level, but some areas for development. A-level teaching is mainly very good. The best teaching is well structured, uses a variety of styles and, in particular, stimulates pupil interaction in discussion and debate. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which contributes strongly to pupils' learning. Schemes of work are well planned and mapped against National Curriculum requirements to provide broad coverage. Lesson planning is good, but sometimes, at Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers fail to set clear lesson objectives. The setting of homework is inconsistent and work is often insufficiently differentiated. Appropriate vocabulary is encouraged, but not always fully explained. Information and communication technology is incorporated into the curriculum, although book resources are poor.
152. There is a good policy for marking, which is supported by end-of-unit evaluation sheets, containing some pupil target-setting and pupil self-review. Ongoing marking, however, contains few examples of formative comment or regular monitoring of targets. The department is developing better procedures for monitoring pupil progress and plans to increase liaison with feeder schools.
153. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in Key Stages 3 and 4 are generally good. There are instances of poor behaviour and attitudes to work, but these are well managed. Pupils generally work hard and interact well with each other and their teachers. Pupils' social and cultural development is enhanced by the Euro-car Commenius project, but cultural opportunities in other areas, such as food technology, are underdeveloped.
154. The department continues to develop its curriculum and monitoring procedures with some thought and care, and has identified major issues in its comprehensive department development plan. Resources are generally well matched to the needs of the curriculum, and accommodation is generally adequate for the curriculum offered. There is currently virtually no facility for computer-aided design to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, although this is identified in the department's development planning. Health and safety issues are well monitored in the workshops and have priority in lessons. The department has no formal arrangements for logging risk assessments. Good use is made of such technician support as is allocated, but the lack of provision is still having an effect upon the effective use of teachers' time. The technician's development of teaching aids and interaction with pupils is of benefit to the department and pupils. The department's industrial links are in need of further development. The department has not yet adopted a co-ordinated approach to their use of terminology and teaching and learning processes and so there is not a coherent department ethos. However, this is a department with sound teachers and management, in a strong position to move forward, monitor pupil progress and attainment more closely, and improve the consistency of pupil achievement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

155. On entry to the school, attainment is close to national expectation. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 attainment was assessed by the school to be slightly below national standard. Teacher assessment for 2000 indicates that attainment has improved to above national average. Girls achieve better than boys. The finding of the inspection is that attainment overall is in line with national expectation, but within teaching groups there is a wide range of levels.
156. Geography is offered as an option at Key Stage 4 for GCSE examinations. The proportion of pupils who continue with the subject is well above the national trend. Geography is a popular choice. Standards achieved by pupils have been consistently above national average with the proportion of girls attaining the higher grades of A\*-C being particularly high. In the most recent GCSE results, for 2000, while achievement across grades A\*-G remains above national standard, attainment at the higher grades of A\*-C has fallen to just below the national average and boys and girls attained almost equally. Within the school, achievement for all pupils is good when compared with other subjects and is average compared with attainment nationally.
157. At A-level, sixth form students have achieved good pass rates during the past three years. In 1999, 23 of the 26 candidates gained a pass, of which 14 were between A and C. In 2000, 18 of

the 21 candidates passed, but the number of A-C grades reduced to 8. Overall continuation and completion rates are good and overall attainment is close to the average nationally.

158. Achievement at both key stages and in the sixth form is good. As pupils progress through the school they make advances in geographical knowledge, understanding and skills and are prepared well for assessments and examinations. For example, in a Year 9 class looking at Alaska, pupils demonstrated their competence in using climate figures to construct graphs and used the information to gain an understanding of the problems that arise when developing the natural resources in this region. In Years 10 and 11, pupils become increasingly capable of using a wider range of information to look at changes in urban environments and the economic, social and moral issues that arise in different cities in contrasting regions of the world. Sixth form students make excellent use of case studies on natural hazards and from textbooks, maps, statistics newspapers and film analyse how earthquake disasters in Turkey and Taiwan have been managed. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress and, where additional support is provided in lessons, progress is good.
159. Standards of behaviour in lessons are generally good. Pupils show interest in their work and cooperate with their teachers. On the rare occasions where unsatisfactory behaviour occurs, this is more evident among boys. In the majority of lessons, pupils demonstrate good organisation and positive attitudes.
160. Teaching is generally satisfactory, with many strengths. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Schemes of work are carefully planned and relationships with pupils are very good. In a minority of lessons, weaknesses in the teaching result from over-reliance on whole-class teaching and the failure to match lesson materials and teaching methods to the wide range of pupils' needs. When this happens, learning is unsatisfactory and pupils make limited progress. Occasionally, particularly with a small number of boys, this leads to low levels of effort, poor concentration and sometimes misbehaviour. Where the teaching is very good, this is because the objectives for the lesson are clear, a range of resources is used and the lesson activities are varied. In these situations, pupils understand what is expected, they work with greater pace and confidence and know how to improve the standard of their work.
161. In all years, there are opportunities for pupils to participate in fieldwork and good use is made of visits to rural and urban areas within the locality, to other parts of the British Isles and abroad - to Mediterranean countries. There are sound procedures for marking and assessing work and teachers work well together as a team.
162. The department is well led and managed and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The head of department provides clear direction and this is supported by good documentation and a development plan appropriate to the school's priorities. Resources for learning are effectively used and the strengths identified in the last inspection have been sustained. The department has not yet developed a sufficient variety of lesson materials to meet the full range of pupils' needs. As the school develops systems to make fuller use of assessment information to set targets for pupils, the department is beginning to analyse pupils' performance in more detail, so that all pupils are appropriately challenged in order to achieve their full potential. This is an effective department with the capacity to raise standards even further.

## **HISTORY**

163. There was no statistical evidence on attainment in history at the end of Key Stage 3 available at the time of the inspection and so judgements are based on the examination of pupils' work carried out before and during the inspection. Based on this, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below that found nationally.
164. Most pupils across the attainment range show knowledge and understanding of the historical situations they study, such as the nature of trench warfare during the first world war, and recall basic facts accurately. They are less confident in the use of historical skills to interpret their knowledge and to produce written accounts. In both oral and written work, many pupils are

hampered by their limited basic vocabulary, although their specialised historical vocabulary is relatively well developed. Higher attaining pupils show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the various forms which primary source material can take and the ways in which it can be used, although only a small number can explain the difference between primary and secondary evidence or are prepared to give their own opinion when using it. Work on the use of evidence is at a very basic level for pupils of this age.

165. The percentage of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 was below the national average and was lower than in 1998. The results in 2000 show a further decrease in the percentage of pupils attaining the higher grades. Although there are no national comparative figures yet available for the results attained in 2000, it is likely that the school's results will be well below the national average. While the percentage of pupils achieving grade A-G in 1999 was slightly higher than is found nationally, there has been a decrease in this figure in 2000. Attainment based on evidence seen during the course of the inspection is also below that nationally.
166. Most pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of an appropriate range of historical facts, situations and personalities and show secure recall in the short term. Some pupils develop the skills of making their own notes, and annotating additional printed material that has been given to them, but many pupils remain heavily reliant on the guidance and support of teachers to produce these coherently. There is evidence of some notes having been produced by pupils following a rigid framework set down by their teacher, only filling in significant missing words. Some pupils do not file and organise their written work in an orderly fashion and this prevents its full use as a means of reference and revision. Many pupils in Key Stage 4 develop the skill of including relevant information and evidence in their written work, although the interpretation and evaluation of facts and situations, along with the tracing of cause and effect, remains very challenging for some pupils. The majority of pupils across the attainment range have a very limited basic vocabulary that seriously inhibits their understanding of source material. Pupils investigating social problems in the USA in the 1920s, for example, did not know the meaning of the word "intolerance".
167. The number of pupils who took A-level in 1999 was too small to make valid comparisons with the national picture in terms of percentages, but no pupils attained either of the two highest grades, while the majority of students attained the lowest grade. There was some improvement in this picture in 2000, although almost half of the students who took the examination attained the two lowest grades.
168. The majority of A-level students fail to develop their skills of interpretation and make insufficient use of the work of well-known historians to inform their opinions. While the higher attaining pupils are able to synthesise and evaluate information, most students do not adopt a sufficiently critical response to their written and oral assignments. Students do not make thorough preparation for lessons. Some of those who presented the results of their research on aspects Bolshevik ideas on democracy, for example, did so on a superficial level with insufficient detail. Students of average and lower attainment do not use effectively the range of supplementary documentary material with which they are provided. They accept it in too uncritical and unquestioning a manner.
169. The attitude and behaviour of pupils in all lessons seen were at least satisfactory and in one lesson it was very good. They are quiet and attentive. Pupils respond well to advice - on the stages to go through in interpreting pictorial evidence, for example. However, there is a significant minority of pupils, mainly in Key Stage 4, who show little real enthusiasm for their work, make a leisurely start on written assignments and have a slow work rate. This is usually in response to tasks which are not sufficiently well matched to their needs and which they know they will find very difficult. When they are offered a range of fairly short-term activities, or activities which make the work easier to understand, their response is more positive and they make satisfactory progress. When teachers' explanations are lengthy, or include too much detail, many pupils allow their attention to wander, although they show sustained concentration and enthusiasm for their work when the subject matter and tasks are matched to their needs. This picture has been maintained since the previous inspection.

170. Owing to the absence of the only full-time member of the history department, the majority of teaching during the course of the inspection was carried out by a temporary teacher who is not a history specialist.
171. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory and approximately one third was good. Teachers make clear explanations and show good subject knowledge. They make good use of questioning to encourage pupils to think about their work and to assess pupils' levels of understanding. Clear reminders and re-capitulations of earlier learning support pupils in acquiring a satisfactory range of knowledge and understanding. When teachers plan to offer a range of tasks and activities, which happens more frequently in Key Stage 3, they engage and maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Teachers offer pupils good support in the development of note-making skills by providing a clear framework for this, although many pupils become too reliant on support and do not make sufficient progress in making notes independently. Despite the fact that all classes, and those in Key Stage 4 in particular, represent a wide range of attainment, teachers do not plan a range of activities to meet the needs of all pupils and the whole class routinely carry out identical tasks. Teachers offer good support to those who find their tasks difficult, but this does little to foster independent learning skills. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection report, although there is still insufficient use made of fieldwork and information technology.
172. The curriculum offered meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and joint planning is taking place with the middle school in order to ensure that new requirements are being met throughout Key Stage 3. Sensible decisions have been made regarding the Key Stage 4 curriculum in order to make it more interesting and accessible to the majority of pupils. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is assessed and recorded, but the information thus obtained is not easily accessible. In Key Stage 4 there are good procedures in place for assessing attainment, for setting targets and for the identification of underachievement. However, insufficient use is made of this information to support pupils and raise attainment. Additional support is offered only to pupils who are having difficulty completing their coursework, and is not specifically targeted at pupils who have been identified as being on the borderline of attaining a higher grade and does not continue after the coursework has been completed. This represents some improvement since the last inspection report, although the use of assessment information to raise attainment has not developed sufficiently. No use of information technology for research or recording was seen, despite the fact that the necessity for the development of this was commented on in the previous inspection report and it appears on the department action plan. There are insufficient text, research and reference books and pupils are routinely supplied with photocopied passages selected by teachers, which means that pupils have limited opportunities to research, select and evaluate information from a range of sources and they fail to develop independent learning skills. The selection of books available in the library is largely inappropriate and does little to encourage the development of research skills.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

173. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last school inspection.
174. ICT is embedded in the curriculum throughout Year 9, Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In addition, at Key Stage 4, ICT is offered as a GCSE and a GNVQ Part 1 optional course. The sixth form curriculum offers the new Advanced Level (AS/A2) ICT course.
175. There is a steady trend of improvement in public examination results over the past three years. At Key Stage 4 they exceed the national average for grades A-C at GCSE, being 55.4 per cent in 1999 and 61 per cent in 2000. Girls have the edge on the boys with a higher percentage of A\* grades. GCE A-level results are in line with the national average and current attainment is slightly above average. At Key Stage 3, teacher assessment indicates that pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations.
176. Within ICT lessons, standards of teaching and learning are always at least satisfactory, often good and occasionally excellent and this is a strength of the department. This is because specialist teachers of ICT have very good subject knowledge, plan and organise lessons well and

use appropriate resources effectively. In turn, this enables pupils to make good progress and has a positive impact on their standards of attainment. For example, pupils at Key Stage 4 understand how data can be collected and used in a commercial setting and can design a data capture sheet using 'PinPoint' software. Sixth form students show an increasing awareness of Internet applications and of computer crime in terms of fraud and copyright infringement.

177. All subjects have development plans for improving pupils' application of ICT but, as yet, these have not been fully implemented. Evidence of effective application of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum includes design and technology, English, history, mathematics and science. For example, in English, Year 10 pupils use the Internet to develop their research skills. In design and technology Year 9 pupils use ICT to good effect for elements of control. The science department leads the way in subject intranet design. Subject areas in need of further development of ICT include art, geography, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Pupils with special educational needs do not have access to specialist software that will support their literacy and numeracy needs.
178. Pupils have good access to the Internet after the school receives authorisation from their parents and its use is supervised according to school policy. Video conferencing facilities are put to effective use for those students who study A-level law as it enables them to gain access to relevant subject expertise from a specialist. Many pupils take advantage of ICT facilities before school starts and at lunch times to support them with their schoolwork. This has a positive impact on standards, particularly in the presentation of GCSE coursework. A significant number of pupils also use their home computers for schoolwork.
179. Training opportunities for teachers, funded through the "New Opportunities Fund", are in the early stages and are a priority for school development. Although the ICT co-ordinator has carried out an audit of Key Stage 3 ICT applications and provided subject leaders with appropriate National Curriculum information, monitoring of the implementation of statutory ICT at Key Stage 3 is underdeveloped.
180. The pupil/computer ratio is 8:1 which is good and provides pupils with adequate access. There is an extensive stock of up-to-date software titles. A full-time technician keeps the technology running smoothly and provides effective day-to-day maintenance.
181. The department is well led and managed. Information is shared with regard to all departmental policies and schemes of work through team meetings and a very comprehensive, high quality handbook. Hardware resources are deployed effectively throughout the school. The school continues to plan for improvement to its hardware facilities from its own budget and makes good use of government grants designated to link the school to the National Grid for Learning. There is a costed plan in place to renew redundant and outdated computers on a rolling programme.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

182. Despite the low levels of attainment of pupils on entry, at the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is above the national average, overall. At GCSE, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\* - C in French (63 per cent in 1999) is above average and has risen steadily since the last inspection. Success continues at A-level in French. Although the numbers involved are small, attainment is slightly above average. In German, however, only 28 per cent gained A\* - C grades at GCSE in 1999, well below the national average. At A-level, however, attainment is above average in German.
183. At both key stages and in both languages, pupils are able to respond to questions in the foreign language. High standards are enforced, but pronunciation, accent and intonation vary according to ability. More able pupils show the ability to expand on minimal answers. Listening skills are developed well and form an integral part of lessons. This difficult skill is reinforced by the use of audio-visual aids and helpful worksheets. Adequate time needs to be allowed for answers, with adequate number of repetitions. Written work varies according to ability and includes exercises for practice and consolidation alongside longer passages of descriptive nature and letters. Pupils take great pride in their work. Setting enables lessons to be planned to suit ability levels, using a

wide variety of methodology and strategies. However, a minority of pupils still lack motivation. Firm handling from the onset is essential.

184. Progress in French and German at Key Stage 3 is good. The procedures to monitor poor behaviour are proving effective. The members of staff are endeavouring to raise the profile of foreign languages in the school and counteract the negative attitude of a minority of pupils on entry. A Year 9 French lesson on illness saw pupils responding at speed to enthusiastic teaching. The pupils enjoyed the lesson. There was constant checking." Vous comprenez? " "Ça va? " "Je vais trop vite? " " Is that alright? Am I going too quickly? " The worksheets were innovative and challenging, building up skills and knowledge.
185. At Key Stage 4 there are still some reluctant pupils, despite the fact that there is a choice of language. Incentives are working well in the GNVQ groups, where pupils have to achieve an average lesson and homework mark of 7 to participate in a factfinding visit to Alton Towers. The objective of the topic is to be able to direct a foreign visitor from a local hotel to the attractions in the theme park and to understand questions asked. A number of pupils still choose to study two languages, which is encouraging. Post 16, despite small numbers, there is interactivity and keenness in classes, with the desire to succeed. The oral competency of these students is impressive.
186. At Key Stage 3, all lessons observed were satisfactory, 67 per cent being good or better. All lessons at Key Stage 4 were satisfactory, with 25 per cent good. In the sixth form, all lessons were taught well; teaching characterised by high expectations, very good subject knowledge and good use of the target language.
187. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and committed and include a native French speaker and two foreign language teaching assistants. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils and lessons are carefully planned and structured, using a variety of methodology and strategies. Teachers are role models in the use of the foreign language. Marking is consistent, with diagnostic and encouraging comments; for example, 'Gut! Ausgezeichnet!' Teachers add their own touch. For example, at the end of some work on sports, the teacher added, 'Moi aussi j'aime nager et me bronzer.' Marking criteria along with English meanings of comments are in each exercise book, to inform pupils and parents of standards. The raising of standards is clearly a target. However, pupils are not always encouraged to make sufficient use of the foreign language in classroom situations, such as when asking permission to open a window or asking for an item of equipment. The department is well led and managed. Marking is monitored systematically, documentation is extensive and schemes of work are detailed and meaningful. Teamwork and idea-sharing play an important part in this department. The examination syllabuses have been closely scrutinised and chosen in the best interest of the pupils. Appropriate homework is regularly set with deadlines. Reports are detailed and report on progress, attainment and attitude, indicating areas for improvement.
188. Good opportunities are provided for trips and exchanges abroad. February saw a German /history trip to Berlin and a French/art trip to Paris is planned for February 2001. The sixth form students can do work experience abroad. There are links with universities, which further extend learning opportunities. Penfriend links for all ages encourage letter writing and the exchange of experiences.
189. The language rooms provide a stimulating environment. The walls are covered in colourful displays of work and posters. Displays on corridors are tasteful, with hints on ways to improve language skills. The examination requirements are shown in detail, so that pupils are aware of topics and deadlines.
190. In the last report, Key Stage 3 standards in German were given as less satisfactory than in French. Good progress is being made to address this, thanks to better teaching. The need for more independent learning was also an issue. This has been addressed in a number of ways; for example, magazines and newspapers are available for the sixth form. Lessons centre very much around the teacher in Key Stages 3 and 4 and this is appropriate for most pupils.

## MUSIC

191. At 88 per cent, the proportion of pupils achieving A\* - C grades in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the national average of 70 per cent, with girls achieving higher standards than boys. Boys' attainment however was higher than for boys nationally. In 2000, boys' attainment has continued to rise but girls' results dropped below the national average. Although in recent years the GCSE results have been above the national average, the numbers taking the examination have been small. The percentages of pupils recently choosing to study music at GCSE and A-level have fallen significantly.
192. A-level results over the last three years, from an entry of one to four students, have been erratic. It is not possible to make significant statistical comparisons because of the small number of students opting for the subject.
193. Standards in music at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999, based on teacher assessments, showed 81 per cent of Year 9 pupils achieving the expected level and above. In 2000 these results have continued to rise with girls achieving better than boys.
194. Observation of attainment during Key Stage 3 lessons, analysis of pupil notebooks and recordings shows that attainment is average overall. The best notation work is excellently presented and all is satisfactory, although there is evidence of incorrect understanding of note groupings and direction of stems on notes. In lessons, pupils listen attentively to demonstrations by staff and other pupils. They show their understanding through their practical work. Pupils show good ensemble skills playing ostinato patterns and melodies together. Lessons are always challenging and well paced, with timed activities, punctuated by evaluations and reflections. Pupils use musical vocabulary effectively. Some prefer not to use traditional notations, but they are able to notate their compositions using appropriate methods.
195. Pupils in lower sets complete appropriate tasks in line with teacher expectations. However, some of this work is lower than National Curriculum expectations for Year 9 pupils. They learn successful ways to combine instruments. Pupils were delighted to hear their samba composition and to appreciate each contribution within the ensemble.
196. Pupils continue to be challenged and motivated effectively during Key Stage 4. The standard of work is generally in line with expectations and some examples seen were above expectations. Attainment is above average at the end of the key stage. Written work is neatly presented, showing appropriate use of musical vocabulary. However, this knowledge is not always effectively transferred to listening skills work, where there is a lack of awareness of correct note groupings. Pupils perform with confidence for different audiences. They perform fluently using keyboards and other instruments. Although they make use of multi-track recorders during their work, there is no evidence of using notation or sequencer programs, or of pupils using discs to save work with keyboards. Compositions vary between treble clef melodies with simple accompaniments to a percussion piece demonstrating layering rhythms and good ensemble skills. The syllabus coverage is satisfactory with a sound balance of activities.
197. At both key stages, learning is well supported by good relationships. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good, with examples of very good teaching at Key Stage 4. Homework is set appropriately to reinforce or develop a particular area. Pupils are encouraged and praised appropriately. A variety of teaching strategies is used, including encouraging pupils to respond physically to music. Class management is strong and lessons are well planned, but specific learning objectives are not always directly linked to the National Curriculum. Pupils appreciate the comments made on their cassette tapes by staff and this form of assessment encourages independent work and enables pupils to refine and develop their compositions. The writing of complete schemes of work for Key Stages 3 and 4 is a priority as well as developing specific assessment points for each unit of work. Pupils with special educational needs are set appropriate challenges and tasks and their progress is monitored satisfactorily.
198. Since the last inspection progress has been made in some areas. The range of music to which pupils listen has been widened and standards in work have been maintained. However other areas have not developed as would have been expected. GCSE pupils have a better understanding of music history but their listening skills remain an area for development. The number of pupils choosing to study music at GCSE and A-level is dropping and an analysis of the

reasons for this needs to be undertaken beyond the department. Provision for computer-aided learning in music has not been developed and this needs to be addressed.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

199. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, for those following the core course in physical education, is also in line with expectations. The pupils following the GCSE course do slightly better in physical education than they do in their other subjects and this represents good achievement. In 2000, 50 per cent obtained grades A\* to C, slightly below the national average of 53 per cent, but over the last four years' results have been at or above the national average. An A-level course is available for pupils in the sixth form via the link with a neighbouring school. The numbers taking this course over the past few years have been too small for valid statistical analysis to be possible. However, the popularity of the course is growing and in the current Year 12 a larger number is following this course.
200. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have ball skills that enable them to participate in a variety of small games including soccer, hockey, netball and basketball. The current Year 9 is also following a health-related fitness course. Pupils were seen using a heart monitor and showing an understanding of resting pulse, how exercise affects the heart and the principles of recovery. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are able to take part in more advanced games showing a greater level of skills and that is seen, in particular, in basketball and in hockey. Pupils in both key stages understand relevant safety issues and are able to offer constructive evaluation on the performance of others when asked, although it is not often spontaneous.
201. Key Stage 4 pupils also show skills in planning as seen in the fitness programme, team tactical planning and in trampolining. Pupils following the GCSE course show a high level of practical skills, but are often weaker in theory work. In 1999 this was particularly true of the boys' achievement in the examination. For many, weak literacy skills impede on their physical education written work. In the sixth form, no practical work was seen. As there is only one advanced level physical education pupil in Year 13, only a limited amount of written work was available for scrutiny. A number of pupils are finding the transition from GCSE and the extended answers required difficult. The school has also achieved a number of successes locally, in particular the under-16 basketball team winning the local tournament and currently the under-14 hockey team is undefeated. Several individuals have achieved success at local, area and national levels.
202. Attitudes to physical education are good and at times very good or excellent. Pupils come with kit, ready to take part in the lessons, participation rates are high and the output of work is good throughout whatever the weather. Progress made by the pupils at the school is good. Progress is seen within lessons and through the key stages. The pupils enter the school at a lower level than that expected by that stage of Key Stage 3 and improve steadily throughout the remainder of Key Stage 3 and through Key Stage 4. There is no significant difference in the progress of different groups of pupils.
203. The teaching of physical education is good with the vast majority of lessons being good or very good and only a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. The best lessons are well planned, with a good progression of skill development, using practices directly linked to the game. Other strengths are seen when pupils are enabled to lead or organise their own warm-up or give suggestions as to suitable exercises for the activity following. Relationships are very good and this enhances the learning environment, as seen when a less motivated group of pupils were handled firmly but gently to encourage their participation. In the GCSE written work, the assignment cover sheet enables pupils to organise their work carefully and marking with constructive comments enables pupils to improve their work. Weaknesses within the teaching are seen when a lesson is heavily teacher dominated and when lessons are not modified to suit the conditions or needs of the pupils. The use of non-specialist teachers in physical education impedes the skill development of some pupils.



204. The curriculum provided meets the National Curriculum requirements in the breadth, but the depth of study is severely limited by the facilities. The gymnasia are small, so that it is not possible for a full game of basketball to be played and the roof is low, which means that, for safety reasons, no advanced trampolining work can be attempted. Pupils showing interest and ability in this area are linked with local clubs. The outdoor facilities and geography of the site also limit progress. The poor draining of the fields means that they are out of use for long periods and were unusable during the inspection. The time taken to travel from one part of the school site to another encroaches on the time available for physical activity. The department is making the best use of the facilities available, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities and links with local clubs. Many pupils are given the opportunity to play in competitive situations through school and house matches. The multi-gym, although small, is a positive asset to the curriculum and the health-related work of the pupils. There is no formal physical education in the sixth form, but pupils may use the facilities in their free time.
205. Leadership is satisfactory, with many good aspects. The documentation with policies and schemes of work is very good, giving clear continuity to the work. There are also very good curricular and assessment links with the feeder school. Since the last inspection, all the positive aspects of the last report have been maintained. Teaching is now good and the pupils undertake a greater amount of analysing and evaluation. In order to raise standards further the department should: monitor the end of Key Stage 3 results comparing them with the pupils' attainment on entry; refine the assessment scheme in line with the new National Curriculum requirements to enable more formative assessment to be used and look at ways of improving the standards of the GCSE theory work.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

206. Levels of attainment in the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education at the end of Key Stage 3 and in the GCSE at Key Stage 4 are generally satisfactory. Attainment is not satisfactory in the sixth form, where the subject is only taught for a few hours to students in Year 13. On entry, the pupils have below average attainment, but they make rapid progress during Year 9. Although the GCSE results last year were below national expectations, the pupils in the current Year 10 are doing work in the new 'short' GCSE course. This work is significantly better and should produce satisfactory results.
207. Since the last inspection there have been major changes. There is now no full GCSE course being offered, but the combination of the Agreed Syllabus course in Year 9, the new 'short' GCSE course in Year 10 and Year 11 and the new Life Skills course are having a marked influence on pupils' progress in the subject. These curricular changes have been supported by improvements in target setting, the quality of marking and improved resources. There has been no improvement in provision for religious education in Years 12 and 13.
208. The attitude of pupils towards their learning is always at least satisfactory and usually better. Pupils commented on how much better progress they are making since coming to this school. They find the range of multi-faith work in Year 9 stimulating. They grasp the main tenets and practices of Christianity and to a lesser degree Judaism, Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Pupils find the specialist teaching stimulating, especially when the topic is based upon specific case studies with which they can identify such as the Brian Greenaway Trust materials. At Key Stage 4 moral issues such as religious and non-religious attitudes to abortion, sex, crime and punishment are seen to be relevant. The response to the more specifically religious and spiritual issues about the nature of God and related aspects of faith as seen in Christianity and Islam are satisfactory. Although such courses are not adequate preparation for any pupil who may want to study the subject at A-level, they do ensure that the whole school population has a thorough grasp of the key issues related to religious beliefs.
209. The enthusiastic teaching and the deep commitment to both the subject and the pupils is notable and always results in satisfactory or good teaching. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The two members of staff have a sharp sense of direction and use a wide range of resources, including stimulating video clips, appropriately. Their knowledge of the subject is good, especially when teaching Christianity. Lessons are quite well planned but there is a tendency for the oral introductions to be too long. Assessment procedures have improved and the marking is now of a

high standard and directly contributes towards the pupils' progress. There is a tendency for questions and discussions to be restricted to factual information rather than exploring the ideas and motives within religions. The textbooks, artefacts and video films are used well, but there is little support material for the pupils to use in investigational or expressive work.

210. The pupils are generally quite keen to learn. They acquire the basic knowledge, stay on task and work as requested. This indicates that they could do more independent or small group enquiry work. The pupils respond well to the opportunities provided by information and communication technology. These are about to be further developed when three computers are installed in the department. Pupils with special needs sometimes struggle with the written work but grasp the key ideas being taught. The classes often have a wide range of ability within them and the most effective techniques for resolving this problem need to be examined.
211. The head of department is a dynamic enthusiast who is totally committed to the school and her pupils. Her colleague is also convinced of the vital importance of the subject. Together they are taking the subject forward rapidly. Also, because of their other senior and middle management roles, the department clearly brings a great deal to the school as a whole and to the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provisions in particular. The department is conscious of the need to provide learning support assistants to enhance the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, but needs to examine how they can be used more effectively.
212. The department has been, and is continuing to be, enriched by improved resources, but the library does not adequately support the Agreed Syllabus, the GCSE courses, or the general interests of pupils. The accommodation is very poor. It is cramped and restricts teaching methods significantly. It has a detrimental effect on standards of attainment.