

# INSPECTION REPORT

**CARDINAL GRIFFIN R.C. HIGH SCHOOL**

CANNOCK

STAFFORDSHIRE

Unique reference number: 124468

Headteacher: MR JOHN LUMB

Reporting inspector: Dr Barbara Hilton  
Rgl's Ofsted No: 3228

Dates of inspection: 11 - 15 September 2000

Inspection number: 223737

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cardinal Way Stafford Road CANNOCK Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. Father A. J.B. Brown
Date of previous inspection:	20 November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Barbara Hilton Ofsted No: 3228	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards? a) The schools results and achievements
			How well are pupils or students taught?
			How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Husain Akhtar Ofsted No: 9561	Lay inspector	N/A	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Philip Winch Ofsted No: 11720	Team inspector	English	N/A
Margaret Price Ofsted No: 19925	Team inspector	Mathematics	N/A
Thomas Jardine Ofsted No: 12890	Team inspector	Science	N/A
Eric Deeson Ofsted No: 15163	Team inspector	Information and communications technology, including business studies	N/A
John Richards Ofsted No: 10288	Team inspector	Art	Sixth form

Vincent Gormally Ofsted No: 10209	Team inspector	Design and technology	N/A
Marjorie Thomas Ofsted No: 12671	Team inspector	Geography	Learning resources
Joyce Sanderson Ofsted No: 1795	Team inspector	History	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
		English as an additional language	
Derek Cronin Ofsted No: 11838	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	N/A
Susan Wilkinson Ofsted No: 15150	Team inspector	Music	N/A
		Special educational needs	
Barry Simmons Ofsted No: 14446	Team inspector	Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Cardinal Griffin is a Roman Catholic voluntary-aided comprehensive school in the Birmingham Diocese. The school serves four Catholic parishes and a wide catchment area. It is popular and over-subscribed: 70 per cent of its pupils are Catholic and it also welcomes pupils of other denominations and faiths. It is about average in size, with a total of 953 pupils, including 118 in the sixth form, and about equal numbers of boys and girls.

The attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 is broadly average for pupils in Years 7 to 9; it is a little below average for older years. Very low numbers of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and they speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, although the number with statements is average for the size of the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the average for Staffordshire secondary schools, which is lower than the average nationally, although the area around the school is socially disadvantaged and still recovering from pit closures in the nineties. The school community is similar in most respects to that at the time of the last inspection, except that the number of pupils has grown by nine per cent overall and the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs has almost doubled.

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

Cardinal Griffin is a good and effective school with several areas of strength. Standards of achievement are good overall with examples of high achievement in several subjects. Pupils are helped to make the most of themselves through the good quality of teaching and learning and very good pastoral support. Staff work together well. Governors are loyal and committed and very supportive of the headteacher, who provides outstandingly good leadership. The school provides very good value for money overall and satisfactory value in the sixth form.

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

- Results at GCSE are rising at a faster rate than nationally; standards are high in art, music, design and technology and physical education.
- Teaching and learning are good: pupils are well managed and expectations are high.
- The curriculum has good breadth and balance and extra-curricular opportunities are particularly good.
- Pupils' personal development is strongly supported and they are helped to make the most of themselves.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and the respect they show for others are strengths of the school.
- The school is strongly and caringly led, and links with parents are valued.

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

- The consistency with which information on pupils' progress is used to involve them in their learning and help them to improve.
- The rate of implementation of plans to use information and communications technology across the curriculum.

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

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

The school has made good improvement, overall, since the last inspection in November 1995. GCSE results are rising at a faster rate than the national average. Good standards of teaching have been maintained. Good progress has been made in most subjects and also in areas of underachievement mentioned at the last inspection, including the use of number in subjects such as science, design and technology, geography and art. Plans are in hand to improve standards in German, and information and communications technology across the curriculum, although in practice computers are little used in several subjects. Satisfactory improvements have been made in the library. While improvements have been made in accommodation for music, modern languages and, more strikingly, for design and

technology, there is much pressure on space in several areas, because of growth in pupil numbers. The school is well placed to improve further because of the very strong leadership of the headteacher, good teamwork among staff and support by governors.

## 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	C	C	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	D	C	

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

In 1999, overall results at GCSE were above both the national average and the average for similar schools. The results for five subjects at the higher grades (A\*-C) in 2000 were in line with the national average for the last few years. In both 1999 and 2000 all pupils achieved at least one GCSE certificate, which is very high compared with all schools nationally.

GCSE results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 1999 were well above the national average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Results in most other subjects were above average in 1999, and markedly so in information technology, art, geography, history, French, music, drama and physical education. High results were maintained in 2000 in information technology, art, music and physical education. Results for science in 2000 were similar to those in 1999; in English they were in line with the national averages for recent years; and in mathematics they dipped to a little below recent averages. In most other subjects results in 2000 matched or exceeded the 1999 national averages, except in business studies, in which results fluctuate, and German, in which results were low in both years. In modern foreign languages results have fluctuated because assessment has not been used consistently to raise achievement.

By the end of Year 9, results of National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science are above average overall, with science results better than those of English and mathematics. Results are in line with those for similar schools. Girls do better than boys in English, as they do nationally.

Results for A level in 1999 were average overall, and similar in 2000. The relative performance of boys and girls fluctuates but generally both make satisfactory progress from their achievement at GCSE.

The overall trend is of improvement in GCSE, at a faster rate than the national average. Boys and girls generally achieve in line with or better than the separate results for boys and girls nationally. The school has introduced systematic testing of the attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 and is starting to evaluate progress across stages. Results at GCSE represent sound progress from generally good levels attained at the end of Year 9. Pupils do particularly well in art, music, child development and physical education. Results at A level represent satisfactory progress in most subjects, although in 2000 they dipped in physics, German and general studies.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very interested in their lessons and proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other and adults.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop a very good sense of purpose as they progress through the school. They show respect for the feelings and values of others.
Attendance	Good, with very little unauthorised absence. Pupils are punctual for lessons.

Pupils participate very well in their lessons and maintain a good pace in their learning, which helps their progress. Participation is high in many extra-curricular activities including sports, musical productions, visits and clubs. Relationships are very good.

## 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 and learning are good. Teaching is good or better in 77 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in about 28 per cent of lessons. In virtually all of the rest it is satisfactory. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory, out of 214 observed. Teachers set challenging and interesting work. Pupils respond well in lessons, maintain a good pace and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. Their number skills are effectively developed in relevant subjects. Literacy is consistently well developed. In several subjects effective use is made of information and communications technology, but not enough use is made of computers across the whole curriculum. The very good relationships and management of pupils support high standards of behaviour.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in most respects and well planned for progression, although not enough use is made of information and communications technology in all other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make good progress through effective support in small groups and in subject lessons, and are helped to do well in examinations.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development is very well supported, overall. They have excellent understanding of right and wrong and gain confidence and mature outlooks as they progress through the school. Understanding of other cultures could be developed more fully.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Understanding of pupils' needs is excellent. Pastoral arrangements and relationships are very good.

The school works very well with parents, who appreciate the good quality of teaching and high expectations of the school. Links with primary schools are very good. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, except for the use made of information and communications technology across the whole curriculum, which is still limited. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. In the sixth form, the choice of A level subjects is good. Extra-curricular activities are very good. The pastoral system is very well organised. The school monitors pupils' attainment systematically. Evaluation of information on progress has improved recently although more systematic use could be made of this to help raise the achievements of individuals and groups of pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher is a major strength. Pastoral responsibilities are very well managed and subject co-ordination is good on the whole.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are loyal and committed. They know the school well and keep in touch with developments through reports and discussion.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring is thorough, including lessons, written work and results. The school has a good sense of its own priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Governors, the headteacher and bursar have successfully funded school priorities in a tight budget situation.

The headteacher has drive and vision and is caring about individuals. Planning for improvement is well managed. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated. Senior managers and governors are scrupulous in pursuing best value, for example, in improving design and technology and computing facilities. Teachers are sufficient in numbers and very hard working. Accommodation is well maintained but under heavy pressure because of rising pupil numbers. Subjects are well resourced.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high standards the school attains.</li> <li>• Behaviour, which they feel is good.</li> <li>• Teaching, which they feel promotes high standards.</li> <li>• The high expectations of the school.</li> <li>• Strong and caring leadership.</li> <li>• Links with primary schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework, which a minority of parents feel is insufficient.</li> <li>• Information provided by the school on pupils' progress.</li> </ul>

Parents are very supportive of the school. They regularly sign pupils' day books. The concerns a small minority expressed were heavily outweighed by praise. Inspectors found homework generally appropriately used. The information provided by the school for parents on the progress of their children, particularly those in Years 7 to 9, makes little reference to the National Curriculum. Pupils, talking with inspectors, had a good sense of the progress they were making. Parents praised the links with primary schools which enabled pupils to settle quickly into the school and make the most of the opportunities provided.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### ***Overall results***

1. The standards pupils achieved in 1999 at the end of Year 9 across the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science were above the national average, and in line with the average for similar schools. This represents good achievement by pupils, relative to their attainment on entry in Year 7, which was broadly average. Overall results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 1999 were above both the national average and the average for similar schools. The results for five subjects at the higher grades in 1999 were above the national average; the results in 2000 were a little lower and in line with the national average for the last few years. In both 1999 and 2000 all pupils achieved at least one GCSE certificate, which is very high compared with all schools nationally. GCSE results represent satisfactory gains on the generally good standards achieved at the end of Year 9.
2. Results for the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (A level) in 1999 were average and they are similar in 2000. In 1999, girls achieved better than boys, although results were closely similar in 2000. Bearing in mind levels of attainment on entry in Year 7 for these year groups, which were slightly below average, and their results at GCSE, achievement is satisfactory at the end of the sixth form.

##### ***Results in the core subjects: English, mathematics and science***

3. At the end of Year 9 in 1999, results in National curriculum tests in English were above the national average, and in line with those for similar schools. Girls performed better than boys, as they do nationally. In mathematics, results in 1999 were broadly average relative to all schools and below average relative to similar schools. Results were best in science, being well above the national average and above average compared with similar schools. Results in all three subjects were better in 2000.
4. GCSE results in 1999 were above the national averages in mathematics, science and English literature and well above average in English language. GCSE results were broadly similar in science in 2000, a little lower in English and they dipped in mathematics to be just below the 1999 national average. Results at A level in English and science subjects are broadly average, as they have been since the last inspection. Results in mathematics in 2000 were good, and much better than in 1999, when they were well below average.
5. Standards in lessons and work observed in the core subjects are above average by the end of Year 11 and already above expectations by the end of Year 9 in English and science, while they are in line with expectations in mathematics. In the sixth form, standards match expectations for A level work across these areas. Pupils achieve well throughout the school in English and science. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory, overall, and good across Years 10 and 11.

##### ***Results of other subjects***

6. Standards in lessons and work seen for Year 9 pupils usually match and sometimes exceed national expectations, particularly in art, design and technology, geography and physical education. Standards are below expectations only in modern languages at this stage, in which writing is the weakest area and speaking and listening are average. Teachers' assessments in modern foreign languages and in music are unreliable and generally over-optimistic. In other subjects, their assessments are consistent with standards in lessons and pupils' work. Overall, standards are good.

7. By the time pupils reach Year 11, they attain standards which usually match or sometimes exceed national expectations in lessons, with high quality work being regularly seen in English, art, geography, music and physical education. In modern foreign languages, writing improves as pupils study for GCSE and overall standards in French and German are average in lessons. The only aspect of pupils' work in which standards are generally below expectations at this stage is in their use of information and communications technology across the curriculum, which is still limited. Good examples were seen of the use of computers for the presentation of work (as in English and in design and technology). In several subjects and in the library, pupils make effective use of computers to research and explore information on CD-Roms and the Internet. Pupils do not have enough experience of using information and communications technology in control applications, for graphical and creative design, nor in composing music. Good teaching and support are helping pupils with special educational needs to keep up with others in their class: they progress well on the whole. Able and talented pupils progress well in most subjects: they are well challenged in lessons, often through good questions which make them think and reflect, as in English, and through their individual assignments. Their high performance in art, music, design and technology and physical education, including competitive sports, is very evident through display and events. Overall, standards are good.
8. GCSE results in most subjects were above the national average in 1999, and markedly so in information technology, art, geography, history, French, music, drama and physical education. High results were maintained in 2000 in information technology, art, music and physical education. Pupils usually achieve much better in art and music, and a little better in geography, than in their other GCSE subjects. GCSE results in 2000 matched or exceeded the 1999 national averages, except in business studies, in which results fluctuate, and rarely surpass national levels, and German, in which results were low in both years.
9. At A level, while results are mostly average, numbers of students entered are small and the grades awarded tend to fluctuate except in art, where results are usually high and in music, where results are usually above average. In 1999, results were weaker in history, economics and general studies. While general studies results have been low, no separate teaching time has been allocated, although students have had opportunities to practice examination questions. Arrangements have changed for students entering the sixth form in 2000, because they are studying key skills, for which time is allowed, rather than general studies. In sixth form lessons, standards are in line with expectations for A level work throughout – except in music, where they are above expectations and in art where they are high.

### ***Literacy and numeracy***

10. The standard of literacy in the school is above average, promoted effectively by the whole school literacy policy. Pupils' listening skills are strong in most subjects – and notably so in English, drama, science, geography and music – having a very positive effect on their learning. Pupils speak clearly and confidently. Younger pupils read out-loud accurately, though not always with good expression; this improves through practice in many subjects. Reading improves through use of the library and quiet reading in form-time, but in modern foreign languages there are not enough opportunities for private reading. Standards of grammar and use of vocabulary are above average. Writing opportunities are well developed across the curriculum. In science, for example, there is some extended writing, including creative work. Pupils studying physical education for GCSE construct careful mock bids to stage the Olympic Games. In drama, GCSE students keep diaries reflecting on the practical work, and this helps them improve their performance.
11. Numeracy standards are satisfactory, overall. In mathematics, by the time pupils reach Year 9, they understand basic number facts and calculate mentally with satisfactory accuracy. By the time they reach Year 11 they have more secure grasp of the principles of number which they use effectively, for example, when working with graphs or equations. Good opportunities are provided in several subjects for pupils to use numbers and mathematical techniques, although opportunities tend to depend on the individual teacher or subject, because numeracy is not developed consistently across the curriculum. In design and technology, pupils have good understanding of geometrical shapes, use calculators competently and measure effectively.

Understanding of perspective, measurement, enlargement and pattern are developed satisfactorily in art. In both history and science statistics and graphs are well used, as well as calculations of time intervals in history, for example, when comparing both earlier and later historical periods.

### **General trends**

12. The overall trend is of improvement in GCSE results, at a faster rate than the national average. All pupils do well at GCSE: boys' and girls' results are generally in line with or better than the separate results for boys and girls nationally. Boys' results were high in 1999 and, in 2000, while they were a little below girls', they were better than the 1999 average for boys. Across Years 10 and 11 pupils make satisfactory gains on their good achievement at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results represent good added-value from pupils' levels of attainment on entry at Year 7. Results of National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science are improving in line with the national trend. In 2000, results improved further. Results at the end of Year 9 and GCSE are better than at the last inspection.
13. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and as they move up the school. In recent years, all pupils on the school's register of special educational needs have successfully gained GCSE certificates. The results for pupils with the highest level of need (statements) in 2000 were very good: two pupils gained certificates in six subjects each and all pupils gained certificates in two or more subjects.
14. Results at A level were satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, and they remain so, now. The numbers of students taking subjects are fairly small and the relative performance of girls and boys fluctuates but generally both make satisfactory progress from their achievements at GCSE.
15. Inspection evidence confirms that the generally good standards at the last inspection have been maintained and improvements made, particularly in English, science, art, design and technology, history and music. Good examples were seen of the use of numeracy in several subjects. In the two areas where more improvement is needed: in modern foreign languages, to regain the high levels reported at the last inspection, and in the use of information technology across the curriculum, plans are in hand to strengthen arrangements.
16. The school sets targets for achievement in Year 9 and at GCSE and A level, both for overall results and for individual subjects. The targets are challenging and discussed annually with governors and heads of departments. Recent improvement in the analysis of pupils' attainment and the tracking of their progress gives the school the capacity to focus more sharply on areas of potential improvement. This it has already started to do, but detailed information on pupils' progress is only now becoming available.

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

17. Pupils enjoy Cardinal Griffin and participate enthusiastically in all that the school provides. They are proud of their school and speak highly of the range of opportunities they are offered. In lessons they are interested and keen to succeed. They listen to their teachers carefully, readily do as they are asked and work hard. Their participation is high in many extra-curricular activities and, particularly, in music and sports activities. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning are greatly influenced by the good teaching, the very good relationships and Christian ethos in the school, and contribute positively to the good quality of education. Examples of excellent learning were observed in the sixth form and in art, music and modern foreign language lessons. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to coming to school. Their behaviour is good and they gain in self-confidence and self-esteem as they become familiar with their support teachers in school. Overall, parents are very pleased with pupils' attitudes and strongly feel that their children like coming to school. Attendance is good, with very little unauthorised absence. Pupils arrive on time and ready for work.
18. Behaviour in the school is very good. Parents and visitors justifiably speak highly of the standards of behaviour. Pupils are open, courteous and respectful. They move around the school in a well disciplined way, including where there are narrow corridors. Behaviour in lessons is

generally very good with many examples of excellent behaviour, particularly in the sixth form. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils treat the school's property with good care. Pupils hold doors open for adults and classes unprompted. Lunch-time is a good social occasion. The end of the school day, when about half of the pupils take buses home, is orderly and peaceful. The number of fixed period exclusions has dropped since the last inspection and is below average. Permanent exclusion is not a feature of the school.

19. The pupils' personal development and relationships are very good, and strengths of the school. A notable feature of the school is the high level of responsibility taken by pupils, particularly by the sixth formers. Pupils lead the whole class prayers, raise funds for charitable causes and sixth formers hold Kid-scape sessions at lunchtime. Those who participate in residential trips cope well with living away from home. As pupils move through the school, they acquire good research skills (good examples were seen in English, history and geography, particularly in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form) and organise their work independently. All groups of pupils work and play together very well. They show respect for each other, including the feelings and opinions of others; for example, they listen courteously to others during whole class discussions and in drama activities. Pupils are confident that bullying, which occurs only rarely, is dealt with effectively. The attitude of others towards pupils who have special educational needs is also good. For instance, a pupil with visual impairment is supported well by friends in physical education.
20. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils' interest in the school was high and their personal development was a strength of the school; these features remain strengths.

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

21. The quality of teaching at Cardinal Griffin is good across all years. In 77 per cent of the lessons seen the teaching was good or better and in 28 per cent of these it was very good or excellent; in virtually all of the rest the teaching was satisfactory; only one weak lesson was seen, out of a total of 214. In English, science, history and physical education a significant number of lessons were very well taught and in art and music the teaching was mostly very good. The good quality of teaching, together with pupils' very good attitudes to their work, are the strongest influences on the quality of their learning, which is usually good.
22. The teaching is characterised by three general strengths: teachers' very effective use of their knowledge and understanding; good planning which involves pupils in a range of varied and challenging activities; and very good relationships which encourage a good climate for learning.
23. Teachers draw very effectively on their subject knowledge in giving good emphasis to main points. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, with pupils of average ability, the teacher's astute questions about the book they were reading, *Talking in Whispers*, helped pupils to remember passages they had previously read and to deepen their understanding of issues of human rights. Similarly, in history, the teacher's questions are well directed towards significant features, as in a lesson where Year 11 pupils were studying the causes and effects of the Depression and the teachers' effective questioning enabled them to consolidate their knowledge and understanding very well and to develop their evaluative skills. In modern foreign languages, teachers speak French and German equally well, which successfully encourages pupils' confidence and skills in speaking and listening. In several subjects, teachers' keen awareness of examination requirements helps to raise standards. For example, in geography, teachers help pupils to build on their previous knowledge and use evidence to make decisions – as in a Year 11 lesson, when pupils were using maps and data and making good gains in their understanding of demographic migration. Similarly, Year 10 pupils studying engineering are learning to take responsibility for their own work, because of the teachers' good emphasis on the requirements of vocational courses and the world of work, as observed in a lesson introducing assembly drawing. In sixth form lessons generally, teachers' good subject knowledge is well used to promote high standards, as in art, where students' observational drawing and craft skills develop very well.

24. Pupils maintain good levels of concentration and productivity because lessons are well planned with a range of challenging and interesting activities and no time is wasted. For example, pupils worked and learned very well in Year 11 English lessons studying poetry. Through discussion, led by the teacher, good questioning and exploring the text for evidence, they learned about the main points of poems, to look at the language of poetry and understand its meaning. Very effective use is made of demonstration and models in science to help pupils to make good gains in understanding the relation between structure and function, as observed in a Year 8 lesson when lower ability pupils were learning how skeletal joints work and in a Year 11 lesson where higher ability pupils were learning about the development of a baby. Teachers help pupils to develop appropriate practical skills through relevant activities. Clear explanations of techniques and well chosen activities help pupils to make good progress in the various aspects of design and technology, for example – as observed in a Year 7 food technology lesson where the teacher explained the use of the oven grill; in a graphics lesson with Year 8 pupils in which the analysis of basic forms and lettering was carefully explained; in hand and machine stitching with Year 9 pupils who were making fabric pictures; and in the use of mortise gauges by Year 10 pupils who were cutting and shaping wood to make trays. In art, teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their own work in terms, for example, of line, shape and texture, so that they improve – as seen in lessons when Year 9 pupils were drawing shells and Year 11 pupils were working on their GCSE coursework based on leaves and feathers. In music, instrumental work and teachers' commitment to extra-curricular activities contribute well to the high standards achieved.
25. Relationships are very good, throughout the school. Good working relationships help students to contribute effectively and build on their understanding. Discipline is consistent and fair. Pupils are able to progress in their work without distraction. They are encouraged to give their best because teachers have high expectations. In a Year 7 swimming lesson, for example, pupils worked hard, and they made good progress in their strokes and the distance they could swim. Year 8 pupils, introduced to volley-ball, responded very well to the teacher's enthusiastic approach, learned to sustain short rallies and developed awareness of the rules and conventions of the game. High expectations in a Year 10 soccer lesson were reflected in the very good learning of pupils, who showed good ball control; overall achievement was above average.
26. In lessons, teachers know the general levels at which pupils are working and set appropriately challenging tasks. Questions are well used by many teachers to make their pupils think and deepen their understanding as, for example, in an English lesson with Year 10 pupils who were listening to each other's views on hunting, and the teacher's well-focused questions encouraged them to improve their clarity of expression and increase their vocabulary. In sixth form lessons, teachers ask searching questions to extend students' understanding as observed, for example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson where students made good gains in understanding mathematical modelling and in a Year 12 chemistry lesson on mass spectrometry which students enjoyed and in which they learned very well. In some modern foreign languages lessons planning, while for the general level of the class, does not take enough account of pupils' individual needs and some are held back. In lessons where work is adapted for individuals and the teacher keeps everyone on their toes then learning is generally good, as in a Year 11 French lesson where pupils were discussing their summer holidays and making use of the language laboratory. Generally, expectations in modern languages lessons are relatively higher in Years 10 and 11 than for younger pupils. Expectations are high in music, especially of performance. Most pupils, especially those who already play a musical instrument, respond well, but those who have few instrumental skills sometimes find it hard to keep up, because plans do not take enough account of their needs.
27. Homework is appropriately set in lessons. It complements class-work well and can be quite challenging, although usually all pupils in a class receive the same tasks, and the opportunity is lost to extend tasks for those who work quickly, or to modify tasks for those who find the work more difficult. Marking is up-to-date. Teachers often give short comments, but relatively few give constructive advice on how to improve, except for students in the sixth form, where marking is generally detailed and helpful.

28. Pupils are helped to develop their basic skills through regular practice in lessons. Younger pupils enjoy reading quietly in early morning form times, and can talk interestingly about their books. Teachers in all subjects make effective use of key words and they emphasise subject vocabulary, which consolidates pupils' understanding, as observed in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where clear emphasis on the words "simultaneous" and "equations" helped pupils to understand how to solve equations with two unknown quantities by elimination, as well as by using graphs. Numbers and mathematical ideas are used effectively by teachers in design and technology, science, geography and art. Satisfactory use is made of computers in lessons in English, geography and history. In other subjects, information and communications technology is only occasionally used, for example, to research topics, as observed in a Year 10 science lesson on metals; there is scope for much greater use of this technology and thus to extend students' independent learning skills. Learning resources, for example, books, videos and apparatus in practical subjects, are otherwise generally well used.
29. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from extra support in lessons which is attentive, builds their confidence and helps them to progress well in their learning. In subjects, teachers generally plan effectively for pupils with special educational needs, and refer to pupils' individual education plans appropriately. Expectations of pupils with special educational needs in lessons are realistic and at the same time sufficiently challenging for their abilities. Pupils with specific physical difficulties, such as visual impairment, are appropriately supported with the help of outside agencies.
30. At the time of the last inspection, teaching had good features in the majority of lessons. At that time, there were shortcomings in a significant minority of English and mathematics lessons and, in art, teaching was mostly satisfactory – teaching is better in all three areas now, and very good in art. General strengths reported at the last inspection have been maintained, in planning and preparing materials for the levels at which pupils are working. The management of pupils is much better now, and is a general strength, enabling pupils to learn well and make good progress. Overall, improvement in teaching has been good.

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

### ***Curricular provision***

31. Cardinal Griffin provides a good range of opportunities across Years 7 to 11. Religious education has a key place in the curriculum throughout the school, in line with its Catholic foundation. Subject schemes include a broad range of experiences. The introduction of the literacy hour has recently augmented work in English. Good features include field work in geography and science, although opportunity for enrichment through visits is overlooked in history. Opportunities in art are rich, especially in aspects of fine art and craft work. A good range of sports is provided in physical education. The system for option choices for Years 10 and 11 is based on pupils' preferred subjects, and thus detailed arrangements alter year-by-year. Both German and French are offered at GCSE, although few pupils choose to take both, and they are influenced by restricted opportunities to start learning a second foreign language in Year 9 (available only to higher ability pupils) and the limited time allowed for the second language in that year. A good range of design and technology subjects is provided, with graphics being popular. Good emphasis is placed on independent learning and responsibility in the vocational course in engineering, provided at foundation level. Pupils who choose to take information technology at GCSE continue to study this subject throughout Years 10 and 11 and generally they are successful; results are good in most years.
32. Extra-curricular activities are very good. Pupils can practise and improve their skills in lunchtime clubs in art, design and technology and most other subjects. The library is available at break and lunchtimes and often very well used by pupils reading, doing homework and researching using books and the Internet. English and drama are supported through theatre visits. An extensive programme of foreign visits benefits pupils learning French and German. Regular practices and



clubs extend opportunities in physical education and assist pupils in reaching very high standards: a school team is representing England in hand-ball, for example.

33. On the whole, schemes of work are well organised so that pupils build on their learning as they progress through the school. Good planning is a particularly strong feature in design and technology. In modern foreign languages, the new head of department is aware of ways in which curriculum can be improved to tackle weaknesses in pupils' performance – in writing and reading, for example – at an earlier stage, and is making a start on this. Schemes of work take account of the general level of each class. On the whole, this system works well, because in many subjects pupils are grouped on the basis of their ability and, with extra tasks to provide more challenge for those who work quickly and modifications for those who work slowly, each pupil is working at a suitable pace. In classes where pupils are drawn from a wide range of ability, activities are not always well matched to pupils' individual needs, as observed in some modern foreign language lessons. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the full curriculum. They receive extra support in some lessons, subject teachers take account of their individual education plans, and many pupils receive extra help, both individually and in small groups.
34. Sixth formers who choose to stay at Cardinal Griffin have a good choice of A level subjects, including subjects they have studied lower down the school, as well as economics, psychology, sociology and business studies. Religious education is provided for all sixth formers, as well as Christian theology as an A level subject. The introduction of new curricular arrangements has broadened the sixth formers' field of study and all are learning key skills. Collaborative arrangements with another local school enable students to take drama, information technology and sports studies at A level. Students wishing to study vocational courses transfer to a local college of further education. The sixth form benefits from its common-room and a study area, which is adjacent to the library. Both are very well used but can be cramped at times of heavy usage. Sixth formers develop good independent learning skills. They are well respected in the school and contribute well to its ethos. They develop a strong corporate identity, a good sense of purpose and maturity and take responsibility for many of their own activities in school. The sixth form is good preparation for the continuing educational opportunities into which most of the students progress.
35. Literacy is well promoted in English and across the curriculum. In many classrooms key words are displayed and referred to in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to read in early morning form-times and through library lessons. Courteous and accurate listening is encouraged by all teachers and emphasised particularly in music. Several subjects make regular use of mathematical techniques: science, geography and design and technology, for example. While numbers, graphs and basic questions are covered in the mathematical curriculum there is no overall co-ordination to improve consistency across the school. In several subjects regular and effective use is made of information and communications technology: in English, history and geography, for example. In other subjects a start has been made, but the coverage is not enough to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in science, mathematics and design and technology, for example. Pupils' opportunities are particularly restricted in art, where little use is made of computers for design and creative purposes, and in music, where computers are little used for composition. The shortcoming in provision of information and communications technology across the curriculum is the only weakness in statutory curriculum requirements. In other respects, National Curriculum requirements are fully met.
36. Personal, social and health education is provided both through religious education, which was not observed during this inspection, and in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils' personal development is well supported overall: they develop a good sense of purpose and responsibility as they progress through the school. Understanding of social issues is developed through work in English, geography and history. Aspects of health are well covered in science and physical education. A very good lesson on reproduction was observed during the inspection. Pupils benefit additionally from advice and support from people outside the school who visit regularly for example, the school nurse. The school's programme on drugs awareness is well planned and strengthened through links with the local youth service.

37. Careers education is well organised and separately taught in Years 10 and 11; it includes work experience and individual careers interviews for all Year 11 pupils. The foundation for careers education is laid lower down the school, with topics in religious education raising awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses and of the importance of making reasoned choices. In Year 9, pupils are assisted in choosing option subjects for GCSE through a whole-day careers convention, as well as through booklets and parents' evenings. Sixth formers receive specialist guidance and help in their plans for future courses and careers, as well as the opportunity for work experience in France and Germany.
38. Links with the main Roman Catholic feeder primary schools are very good. Teachers of English, mathematics, science, music and physical education liaise with their primary colleagues and Year 6 primary pupils enjoy coming into Cardinal Griffin for a day of lessons, including information and communications technology, design and technology and science, for example. Effective liaison with the neighbouring secondary school extends sixth form opportunities. Links with business and the world of work are not a strong feature of the school: there is scope for extending such opportunities across the curriculum. A good start has been made in design and technology, especially through engineering and graphics. Strong links with local Catholic parishes both support pupils' personal development and also extra-curricular opportunities – for example, in speaking to an audience and in musical performance.
39. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was judged to be good, and it remains so now. Since that time the choice of subjects in the sixth form has been considerably extended. A weakness, reported at the last inspection, remains unresolved – arrangements for learning a second modern foreign language are limited and do not encourage vigorous take-up of a second foreign language for GCSE.

#### ***Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development***

40. Overall, pupils' personal development is very well supported. The school, in its mission statement, explains its intention to build a community based on Christian values, tolerance and respect, and it succeeds in this. Assemblies and form times are carefully planned and always include prayers, readings and presentations linked to a theme and prepared by pupils. These themes frequently take significant current topics, such as the Olympics, and link them to Christian teaching and belief. Pupils listen attentively and with interest. The school chaplain, with the help of the religious education staff, arranges regular Masses. Retreats in Year 8 and 10 to the conference centre at Alton Castle and to Soli House are popular - at least a third of each year group volunteers to attend. All staff share the responsibility for spiritual provision and have prepared themselves by staff training at Soli House. Religious education staff help the pupils to prepare for Mass and liturgies in school and at the local primary schools – often involving substantial weekend preparation. The school's Anglican staff and pupils regularly use the chapel and the Anglican minister is a welcome visitor. In lessons in almost all subjects opportunities are included for spiritual, aesthetic or creative development; in English, art, design and technology, geography and history these opportunities occur regularly - for example, the need to respect God's creation is emphasised when discussing environmental issues in geography.
41. Staff are good role models. They make their expectations of high standards of behaviour in all aspects of school life very clear, promoting them consistently, vigorously and sensibly. As a result, pupils show genuine tolerance and respect for individuals and their opinions throughout the school, for example, in the respect for fair play shown in physical education and in the discussion of moral issues in many sixth form lessons.
42. Collaborative work in lessons, and the many and varied opportunities for responsibility, foster very good social development. Pupils work well together in lessons; group work encourages them to listen and respect each other. Opportunities for the personal development of pupils with special educational needs are good. They develop confidence in themselves and working with others through small group work and inclusion in larger classes. Sixth formers play a considerable part in school life: in the weekly Youth Club, discos, paired reading, Kid-scape, and at many school events. Younger pupils assist on school occasions as guides or demonstrating activities and

volunteer to help teachers in class routines. The School Council, however, plays a limited role in school life. Close links with the local Catholic parishes involve many pupils. The music department has a year-long programme of performances and visits throughout the community, supported by much commitment from staff and pupils. Considerable sums of money are raised regularly for well-established charities such as the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and Dr. Barnardo's and the school has spontaneously responded to emergencies, such as helping Bangladeshi flood victims, an initiative suggested by one Year 9 pupil, which resulted in organised fund raising, supported by both teachers and pupils. A strong link has been maintained with an El Salvador convent which has included help after the devastation of hurricane Mitch.

43. Opportunities for cultural enrichment are many. Music and sports are outstanding. Theatre visits, drama productions, residential trips, field work and work experience in France and Germany for some sixth formers, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, all contribute to a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. The school believes that it achieves multi-cultural education through its teaching and practice of respect and toleration for everyone, supplemented by study of relevant topics in subjects, pilgrimage to Lourdes, the Sixth form Amnesty group, and charity work. However, as the school's catchment area is not a multi-racial one, pupils have little direct experience of a multi-cultural society.
44. At the time of the last inspection, the spiritual and moral development of pupils was nurtured well and this remains so, now. The school is still an orderly community in which there is a high degree of mutual respect. Vigour and sensitivity are still key features of the ethos of the school. High standards have been well maintained.

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

45. Pastoral arrangements are very effective, managed thoroughly and very sensitively. Staff know pupils well and individual pupils are well supported by the very good relationships which exist between them and staff. These strengths have very beneficial effects on pupils' learning.
46. The school cares very well for all its pupils, including those with special educational needs. Arrangements for pupils' welfare and child protection are good. Staff are vigilant about health and safety. Pupils' welfare and specific educational needs are well supported by visiting specialists.
47. Teachers know individual pupils very well and work effectively to meet their needs. The school monitors and promotes the attendance of individual pupils well. Procedures for recording and attendance, aggregating data and following up absences are good. Registration complies with the legal requirements. Good behaviour and personal development are promoted and monitored very well, for example, through the day book and progress report systems. The heads of key stages monitor and support pupils' personal development across relevant years. Discipline is strong and pupils learn to respect and treat others with courtesy; pupils and parents report that there is very little bullying. The calm atmosphere in the school encourages learning and supports high standards of achievement.
48. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection and are mostly good. Pupils' attainment at entry, the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, and public examination results, are analysed to build up a clear picture of overall achievement. Good procedures are in place in most subjects for assessing pupils' attainment and progress as they pass through the school, although the monitoring of marking lacks rigour and there is some inconsistency in practice across subjects and stages. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is generally satisfactory. The information is used well to determine the grouping of pupils and to identify pupils with special educational needs. Pupils have a good general sense of how well they are doing but, especially for younger pupils, little specific information is provided about what they need to do to improve, and where they are, in relation to the National Curriculum.

49. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are being improved and in some subjects, for example, English, mathematics and science, good procedures are in place for tracking pupils' progress. However, the use of the data to monitor progress, identify under-achievement and set targets is not well established across the school. In two areas monitoring is weak: in the assessment of pupils' information and communication skills across the curriculum and in the ways in which assessment information is used in modern foreign languages to raise achievement.
50. The school monitors the academic performance and personal development of pupils with special educational needs effectively. The systems for identifying pupils in need of extra help and for monitoring the progress of pupils with statements of special educational needs are thorough and in place; statutory requirements are met. Pupils move onto and off the special educational needs register as their achievements improve or change. The good preparation and use of pupils' individual education plans combined with good teaching strategies help teachers to set appropriate targets and assess progress.
51. The school provides effective guidance on courses and personal matters for all pupils. Pupils arriving in Year 7 follow an induction programme; they settle in quickly and make new friends. The homework club, homework facilities and mentoring arrangements help pupils to complete tasks. Good guidance is given on the choice of GCSE options at the end of Year 9 and about moving on to further and higher education after Year 11 and the sixth form. Personal and social education, taught through the curriculum and in religious education, raises pupils' awareness of issues related to their health and safety. The quality of the support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs is good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and attitudes to work.
52. Pastoral arrangements were effective at the time of the last inspection, and remain so, now. Then, arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting were being developed: progress has been good in establishing overall systems. Then, as now, analysis of results was detailed. A start has now been made on monitoring the progress of pupils as shown in their examination results relative to their earlier achievements ("value-added"), but this approach is not yet established. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made in using assessment to raise standards.

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

53. Parents are loyal and, as at the time of the last inspection, are very supportive of the school, which is oversubscribed. They show a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. Parents are particularly pleased about the way in which the school helps their children to work hard, make good progress, behave well and become mature and responsible. They appreciate the good teaching and management in the school. A small minority of parents feels that homework is insufficient and information about pupils' progress could be better. Inspectors found that homework is generally appropriately used. Information on pupils' progress gives little detail relative to the National Curriculum, and there is scope for including this.
54. The school's links with parents are effective and the impact of their involvement on children's learning is good. Parents are consulted on important issues, for example, their views have been sought about sex education and the mission statement. The school works well with parents of pupils with special educational needs. All parents are informed and involved when their child is placed on the school's register of special educational needs, and they contribute well to annual reviews of their child's progress at all stages of the Code of Practice. Where pupils are taught in small groups this is explained and discussed with parents. They are also invited to discuss any concerns they may have at parents' evenings or through telephone conversations with the co-ordinator for special educational needs.
55. The school provides good general information for parents through the prospectus and regular newsletters. The former does not fully meet the statutory requirements, since national results of tests and public examinations are not included; parents are informed of these in the governors' annual report. Day books are used well and are an effective channel of communication. The

home-school agreement is clear and informative. Reports to parents on their children's progress indicate what children can do but do not give enough information about what the standards should be – there is little reference to the National Curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Summary reports, compiled by tutors for sixth formers, are good.

56. Parents support the work of the school well by ensuring that their children attend regularly and in correct uniform, by encouraging the completion of homework and by joining in the activities arranged by the Cardinal Griffin Association. A number of parents provide practical assistance with visits, sports and religious events. Music is an area of the curriculum which the parents support particularly well through support for their children's instrumental tuition and attending music concerts.

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

### ***Leadership and management***

57. Cardinal Griffin is strongly led by the headteacher, who has very high expectations, vision and drive. Effective team-work among the senior management team, and staff as a whole, results in a purposeful, supportive learning environment, which is focused on raising achievement and the mission of the school, to love God and our neighbours as ourselves.
58. Planning for overall school improvement is well organised and reflected in plans for subjects. Most subject areas are effectively directed and co-ordinated. At the time of the inspection, leadership of modern foreign languages was new although steps had already been taken to improve schemes of work. Leadership in information and communications technology has been successful in providing good teaching and learning in this, as a separate subject, but impetus has been lacking across the curriculum. Governors take a keen interest in the work of subjects. They regularly receive information on results and, from time to time, presentations and reports on departments. They know staff individually and are keen to help them do their best for the pupils. The senior management team is able and provides strong support for the headteacher. The delegation of pastoral and curricular responsibilities has been effective in most respects. The pastoral organisation is particularly strong. Heads of year and form tutors guide pupils very well. They are successful in encouraging positive attitudes among pupils: "I'll give it my best go" was expressed by a Year 11 pupil about GCSE, during the inspection. Pupils in Year 7 are encouraged from an early stage to be helpful and friendly to each other. Bullying is hardly known in the school.
59. The school is giving a sharper focus to raising pupils' achievements and the work of subject departments. Over recent months, the analysis of added-value, shown in GCSE results for subjects relative to the results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, has been greatly improved and, also, the analysis of added-value at the end of the sixth form relative to GCSE. The delegation of responsibility for curricular areas, through one deputy headteacher and onto heads of departments, has served the school well until now. For example, in the last year, schemes of work have been revised and the monitoring of lessons strengthened. However, the school recognises that its sharper focus on achievement and increased use of assessment information requires more management time and, helpfully, plans to share line-management responsibility for curricular areas among the senior management team. Senior management has intervened to strengthen work in modern foreign languages. Leadership is decisive and quick to take action in matters of school improvement.
60. The leadership and management of the special educational needs department are good. Much work has been done to involve subject areas. The impact of the special needs staff is seen in the development of suitable work for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching and support staff are suitably trained according to their roles or have undertaken appropriate in-service training to support them in their work. The senior management team and governing body are fully involved in the special needs of pupils. Finances are used well, although they are low compared with other areas. Pupils with the same needs are taught together to make best use of the finances available.

61. Governors take a keen interest in all aspects of the school, and in practical matters, especially. They have striven hard to improve accommodation, with some success. The new design and technology block is stunning and, just after the inspection, the school learned that two new classrooms would be built. Pressure on space remains a problem, however. Clergy represent close links with parishes and homes which support pastoral arrangements strongly. Several governors have business and accountancy backgrounds and oversee budgets scrupulously. Parents are open and honest about their perceptions. Governors are unanimous in their strong support for the headteacher and the improvements he has managed. Their confidence is well placed. Governors are fulfilling their statutory requirements, except that information and communications technology is not yet used across the whole curriculum and, in the prospectus, national examination results are not shown, so parents cannot compare how their children have achieved, relative to the national picture. All pupils have access to the full curriculum, except in the opportunity to take a second modern foreign language at GCSE. The school is well organised to help all pupils do their best and achieve well.
62. The school monitors its own performance carefully. Results are reviewed by the headteacher, senior staff, heads of departments and governors. Lessons are visited, pupils' written work and homework are reviewed. Appraisal has been in place and arrangements are completely in hand for the assessment of threshold performance. Strong action is taken to achieve targets. Priorities to improve design and technology accommodation and the number of computers have been acted on vigorously by the governors, headteacher and other staff. All of the key issues of the last report have been addressed and improvement made in most. The school was very well managed at the time of the last inspection, and remains so, now.
63. The budget is managed very carefully and efficiently. The amount of money per pupil coming into the school is significantly below average. Bearing in mind the generally good quality of provision, good teaching and good progress pupils make, particularly up to GCSE, this represents very good value for money. Progress across the sixth form is satisfactory and a good range of A level subjects is provided. Sixth formers are confident, positive about the school and three-quarters of those who stay on in Year 13 continue in education, most at university. The sixth form provides satisfactory value for money
64. The school has a good sense of best value. Governors with business backgrounds are astute in handling contracts and agreeing arrangements for maintenance, redecoration and repairs, ably assisted by the bursar and non-teaching staff. Administrative, care-taking and cleaning staff contribute excellently to the high standards and good relationships in the school. The school makes very good strategic use of its resources. Since the last inspection, the transfer from grant-maintained to voluntary-aided status has been achieved smoothly. Investment in accommodation and facilities for design and technology has led to substantial improvement in accommodation for the subject, in learning opportunities for pupils and their achievements.

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

65. The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced teachers to deliver the curriculum. They are effectively deployed to make the most of their expertise and experience which contribute well to the good quality of teaching and learning. Teachers work hard, both through time-tabled lessons and in the time they give to extra-curricular activities. The school is well served by its non-teaching staff who contribute a great deal to the smooth running of the school. The team of learning support assistants contributes well to the good progress of pupils with special educational needs. The inadequacy of science technicians noted in the previous inspection has been rectified. New staff are effectively inducted into the work of the school, the good team work and mutual support in departments contributing well. Arrangements for professional development are efficient and well linked to the school's development plans.
66. Whilst accommodation is adequate to teach the curriculum, the growth in pupil numbers puts considerable pressure on the school's buildings. The school enjoys some good specialist accommodation. The colourful, but compact, design and technology block provides very good

facilities so that all lessons are taught in specialist rooms. Physical education enjoys very good facilities at the school site, with a sports hall and extensive, well-maintained playing fields. These, combined with use of the adjacent leisure centre, provide excellent facilities for a broad range of activities, with a positive impact on the good quality of pupils' learning.

67. Improvements have been made to the accommodation since the previous inspection. Provision for music has been much improved; the two practice rooms are extensively used, and there is now need for a third. The weaknesses in the accommodation stem from the shortage of specialist rooms as the school population grows. An additional room for modern foreign languages has gone some way towards easing the pressure on modern foreign languages, although the departmental office has to double as a classroom for some lessons. Laboratories are insufficient for all science lessons so that classes rotate between rooms, with some disruption to pupils' learning. Accommodation for information and communications technology is being improved, but at the inspection the two specialist rooms were small for full sized classes. Sixth form students enjoy the use of a common room and private study room; but both are becoming cramped as numbers increase. Pupils expressed concerns about overcrowded corridors and the lack of lockers. Boys are concerned about the lack of mirrors in some toilets which are brightly decorated and clean, both for boys and girls. Improvement to the buildings is a continuing priority and senior managers work hard to improve facilities, within tight budget constraints. The buildings are welcoming, clean and well-maintained - a tribute to the hard work and care of the team of site supervisors. Displays of pupils' work in central areas, corridors and subject rooms contribute strongly to the creation of a stimulating environment for learning.
68. Subjects are generally well resourced, with equitable allocations across the curriculum. The effective management of resources has a positive impact on the good quality of teaching and learning. The school has improved its stock of computers, which are mainly in central locations which can be booked by teachers. However, access to computers remains a problem for some subjects and there is not enough suitable software, both in subjects and for supporting pupils with special educational needs. It is planned that two new rooms, agreed after the inspection, will increase access to information and communications technology. The school has made improvements to the library. Since the previous inspection it has been refurbished, computers have been installed and the librarian's hours increased to improve pupils' access. Several initiatives have been introduced to encourage the use of the library. A cross-curricular steering group examined ways to encourage its use for independent research. Younger pupils are encouraged to read; books are provided by the library for silent reading during tutor time each morning. Pupils now make good use of the library at break and lunch-times, but it is not open to them before or after school. It is extensively used by sixth form students for private study and by younger pupils who borrow books to read in the morning form times. However, the library is small for the number of pupils in the school, and the book stock needs up-dating to maintain the interest of young adult readers, especially.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. *To further raise the standards of work and attainment of pupils, the governors, headteacher, senior management team and staff should:*
- improve the consistency with which information on assessment is used to involve pupils in their learning and to raise standards in subjects (see paragraphs 48, 49, 114 and 149);
  - accelerate plans to use information and communications technology in all subjects (see paragraphs 35, 115, 122 and 156).
70. The use of information and communications technology across the curriculum was included as a key issue of the last report and, while improvements have been made, they are not sufficient to meet National Curriculum requirements.
71. In addition to the preceding key issues, two weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan. Pressure on accommodation is a significant problem, because of rising pupil numbers (see paragraph 67). Standards in modern foreign languages, which are now average, have slipped from the high levels reported at the last inspection (see paragraphs 143 and 151).



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	214
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2.8	25.2	49.1	22.4	0.5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	835	118
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	63	0

Special educational needs	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	106	0

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 (1999)	72 (97)	62 (77)	134 (174)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	46 (63)	55 (68)	52 (65)
	Girls	57 (69)	50 (55)	51 (52)
	Total	103 (132)	105 (123)	103 (117)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (76)	78 (71)	77 (67)
	National	(63)	(62)	(55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (28)	43 (36)	41 (34)
	National	(28)	(38)	(23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	45 (53)	60 (72)	46 (64)
	Girls	53 (68)	50 (61)	46 (49)
	Total	98 (121)	110 (133)	92 (113)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (70)	82 (76)	69 (65)
	National	(64)	(64)	(60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (35)	49 (38)	37 (29)
	National	(31)	(37)	(28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 (1999)	68 (70)	75 (76)	143 (146)

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	29 (39)	59 (68)	68 (70)
	Girls	39 (40)	66 (72)	75 (76)
	Total	68 (79)	125 (140)	143 (146)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (54)	87 (96)	100 (100)
	National	(46.6)	(90.9)	(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39 (42)
	National	(38.0)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000 (1999)	20 (17)	29 (28)	49 (45)

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	14.3 (10.2)	16.0 (18.3)	15.3 (15.2)	1.4 (0)	0.8 (0)	1.3 (0)
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.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	945
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	14	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7-13**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	210

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7-13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	82.1
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7-11**

Key Stage 3	26.8
Key Stage 4	19.8

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	2,172,031
Total expenditure	2,258,620
Expenditure per pupil	2450
Balance brought forward from previous year	224,640
Balance carried forward to next year	138,051

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	914
Number of questionnaires returned	277

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	51	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	47	1	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	50	12	3	2
The teaching is good.	47	50	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	49	10	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	30	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	28	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	41	43	12	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	63	33	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	43	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	41	4	2	6

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents at their meeting with the registered inspector were very supportive of the school. The concerns expressed by a small minority were heavily outweighed by praise. Homework was not mentioned as a concern at the parents' meeting, when parents said enough was set. Inspectors found homework generally appropriately used. At their meeting, parents said they received enough information on their children's progress and that the school was very approachable and attentive to their concerns. Parents praised the links with primary schools which enabled pupils to settle quickly into the school and make the most of opportunities provided.

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

### **ENGLISH**

72. Standards in English are above average overall. In the sixth form, the standards are in line with expectations for A level. Pupils achieve well in English.
73. The results of National Curriculum tests in English at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were above the national average and in line with those of similar schools. Results in English were similar to those in mathematics, but not as good as those in science. Girls did better than boys, as nationally is the case. Results in 1999 were better than in previous years and better again in 2000, particularly at level 6 and above.
74. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades (A\*-C) in the 1999 GCSE examination in English was well above the national average, and above average for schools of similar intake. Over the three years up to 1999, results had remained consistently above or well above average. In 1999, boys did better than girls, which is different from the national trend, and their results were well above the national average for boys, while girls' results were average for girls. In GCSE English literature in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades (A\*-C) was above the national average, results being particularly good across grades A\*-B. Over the three years to 1999, results had risen steadily. In 1999, girls did a little better than boys and their results matched the national average for girls, though boys' results were well above the national average for boys. Results in English were better than those in mathematics and science. In 2000, GCSE results in English language were lower and closer to the national average for 1999. This was mostly due to a significant drop in boys' results though these were still average for boys nationally. In English literature in 2000, GCSE results were slightly below recent national averages. This drop was mostly because of girls' results which dropped below the national average for girls. A few pupils take the Certificate of Educational Achievement and usually do well. In the sixth form, results in A level English literature in 1999 were average across the full range of grades (A-E), with a good proportion of the higher grades (A-B), in line with results for previous years. In 2000, results remained average, but fewer students reached the higher grades. For the first time, students were entered for A level in English language. Across the full range of grades (A-E) results were average, though well below average at the higher grades (A-B). Students generally achieve at least in line with prior attainment.
75. The GCSE results for drama in 1999 were well above the national average, however they dipped in 2000 and to a little below average. Numbers entered are low and statistics should be treated with caution. Pupils do well in relation to their capabilities. Lower-attaining pupils often achieve higher grades in drama than in their other subjects. The few students who take A level theatre studies through arrangements with a neighbouring school usually achieve a pass grade.
76. By the age of 14, in lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards in English are above average. Pupils speak with clarity and confidence, using a wide range of vocabulary. They listen closely to their teachers and to one another in group work, as in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were discussing 'My Rights'. Pupils read aloud accurately, though not always with good expression. They understand what they read, as in a Year 9 lesson on the opening scene of *Macbeth*, and many can grasp hidden meaning. Lower attainers, however, tend to take words at face value. Pupils have a good range of writing skills which enables them to produce creative, discursive and reflective writing, such as 'My Autobiography'. They write in different formats such as letters, play-scripts and poems and can structure a more formal piece, such as a witness statement from Mr Brownlow in *Oliver Twist*. They write engagingly in response to literature, developing changes in mood and atmosphere, as on the ball scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. Their accuracy in grammar and punctuation is good and they use a wide-ranging vocabulary and varied sentence structure. Spelling is less consistent, especially in boys' writing. Presentation of work is very good, with effective word-processing enhancing the appearance of several pieces.

77. By the age of 16, pupils achieve above average standards. In speaking, they develop ideas in depth and sustain an interesting conversation. They can enter a role convincingly or ask relevant questions. Listening is a particular strength: they listen very carefully and respond appropriately. For example, Year 11 pupils studying Hardy's poem *The Workbox* gave full attention to individual pupils who were reporting on ideas gathered in group discussion. Reading aloud is fluent and accurate. Pupils convey interest in what they read, give due weight to punctuation, and are able to discuss meaning and style – for example, with reference to poems studied in the GCSE anthology. Pupils write well and can sustain accuracy for several paragraphs and in different styles – for example, in reflective writing on holidays, when making a case about capital punishment, and for a speech on the relative importance of humans and animals. They write sensitively about literature – as, for example, about loneliness in *Of Mice and Men* – and discuss characters such as *Lady Macbeth* and *Snowball* (from *Animal Farm*) in detail. Middle and lower attaining pupils do not always support arguments with relevant quotations, and this lessens the impact of their writing.
78. By the age of 19, students achieve standards which are in line with course expectations for A level English. They discuss their work with confidence – as in lessons on the language acquisition of infants, and on characters in *Wuthering Heights*. They listen respectfully to others' views and read with good comprehension and appreciation of plot structure and style – as for a book review on Nicholas Evans' *The Loop* and in work on Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Students write enthusiastically about literature such as *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, although they sometimes lapse into summarising the plot rather than giving their own opinions. They write well on linguistic factors influencing the development of English from Anglo-Saxon to the seventeenth century. Occasionally, work is marred by errors of expression and spelling.
79. In Year 7, pupils are making a good start in acquiring drama skills. In lessons they learn to listen, speak clearly and to project their voice. Drama lessons are not provided separately in Years 8 and 9. Pupils starting their GCSE course in Year 10 learn quickly and make good progress. By the age of 16, in lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in drama is average overall: the range of ability within the Year 11 class is wide and some pupils use a limited vocabulary. Pupils can enter a chosen role and sustain it well. Vocabulary is sometimes limited. In group work, pupils use a script well to plan and produce suggestions for staging, costumes and lighting. They keep diaries in which they reflect on their work; presentation is good, but some entries are too descriptive, and lack evaluation.
80. Students, including those with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well. On entry, attainment is broadly average. By the end of Year 9 it is above average, and this creditable standard is maintained – and sometimes exceeded – by the end of Year 11. Although GCSE results in 2000 were not as good as usual, this particular year group was below average in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1998, and so made good progress to reach the national average in GCSE English language. In the sixth form, students achieve results which are at least in line with their capabilities. In their time at school, students improve their listening skills, the breadth of their vocabulary, their ability to write for different audiences, drafting skills which they use to improve technical accuracy, and the structuring of a literature essay. The survey of pupils' work revealed good continuity and progression between the key stages.
81. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. National curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 remain high and there is significant improvement in GCSE results from just below average to well above average in 1999. In A level examinations there is improvement in the number of students achieving the higher grades (A-B). At the last inspection, there were significant shortcomings in teaching and learning in a fifth of lessons; the pace was slow; pupils were not fully involved and were restless and inattentive. Now there are no major shortcomings. Teaching and learning are good: they are at least satisfactory in all lessons and nearly always better. This represents a very substantial improvement and explains why attainment is as high as it is.
82. Overall, teaching and learning are good in English. Lessons are always at least satisfactory. In nine out of ten lessons, they are at least good, and in more than one third of lessons they are

very good, and occasionally excellent. In drama, teaching and learning are never less than good, occasionally excellent. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. As a result, probing questions guide pupils to look closely at language, as in a Year 11 lesson on Hardy's *The Workbox*, and a Year 10 lesson on the topic 'It's our world: or is it?' Teachers also use questions well to assess progress and to make pupils think. Occasionally, questions are directed at the same individuals, and more reticent pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to participate. Teachers plan well to cover all aspects of English in a lesson, and to provide an interesting variety of activity, so that pupils' concentration is maintained and learning is rapid. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, pupils were actively involved from the outset in several warm-up tasks, and in a Year 9 English lesson, the teacher built well on what pupils knew to encourage a variety of sentence openings and methods of linking ideas. This helped pupils to make significant improvements to work already drafted. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good, thus pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and behaviour excellent. As a result, pupils learn quickly, concentrate well and respect one another's ideas – as in a Year 10 lesson in which pupils in groups analysed letters of application. Group work is an impressive feature of English and drama lessons. Teachers follow up small group discussions well, and all pupils have the opportunity to share ideas with friends. This helps pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills and the teacher to assess pupils' achievements. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on *Wuthering Heights*, students discussed how Cathy had changed since her return to Thrushcross Grange, and clarified their thoughts through sharing their ideas. Teachers have very good classroom management skills. They respect pupils' views and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, in an excellent Year 7 drama lesson – pupils' first drama lesson at Cardinal Griffin – the teacher gave pupils the responsibility of grouping themselves according to his requirements. This involved pupils actively in their own learning and they made excellent progress. Time in lessons is well used. Lessons begin punctually and move at a brisk pace, so that pupils consolidate their learning and acquire new skills quickly. Their interest is sustained and they work hard. Teachers match resources very closely to the needs of pupils. For example, in a Year 11 lesson for lower attaining pupils who were preparing for the Certificate of Educational Achievement, the teacher's excellent video compilation of advertisements gained pupils' attention from the outset and stimulated their imagination. In an excellent Year 7 literacy hour, the work was clearly differentiated to suit the mixed ability class, and the teacher's organisation was impeccable. While many lessons end with a well-planned summing up of what has been achieved, and the setting of appropriate homework, occasionally this is rushed. Some of the lesson's impact is lost and pupils have insufficient time to reflect on homework requirements. Teachers mark pupils' work well. The marking of A level work is particularly good, with helpful comments clearly showing a student how to improve.

83. The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing a good range of learning opportunities. Schemes of work give due weight to both language and literature. The literacy hour has just been introduced in Year 7. The units of work are good and very well resourced. Information and communications technology is effectively used in word-processing, and retrieving information from the Internet – for example, on Shakespeare and his times – and there are plans, in line with the whole school development plan, to develop this further. Pupils who are gifted and talented have challenging material to work on, and those with special educational needs benefit from well-informed help by support teachers and assistants. An interesting range of extra-curricular activities is provided, such as debating, public speaking, theatre visits, and drama productions, including an annual pantomime in which the Year 10 drama group performs at a primary school. Assessment procedures are very good and information well used to raise attainment. For example, the pupils' 1998 National Curriculum test answers were analysed to see why results fell to below average, so that effective action could be taken when modifying schemes of work, and this has been effective – results are much better, now. English and drama contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers are very good role models and have very high expectations of behaviour. As a result, there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Group work develops pupils' social skills, and a study of literature widens their spiritual and cultural awareness – as in work on war poetry in Year 11, and on pre-twentieth century literature throughout the school. The department is well led, with a clear sense of educational direction and a very keen awareness of the school's ethos. Teachers work well as a team and are keen to raise attainment. The head of department has sensibly identified GCSE



literature as an area for improvement, especially at the higher levels, and the need for further development in the use of information and communications technology. Separate drama lessons have just been introduced into Year 7, in response to the new National Curriculum. Given the commitment of staff and the excellent attitudes of pupils, the capacity for further improvement in English and drama is good.

### **Literacy**

84. The standard of literacy in the school is above the national average which helps pupils to do well in all their subjects. In English, pupils speak clearly and confidently. They listen very well. Pupils read accurately, though not always with expression, and have a clear understanding of the text. They write in a wide variety of forms and for different audiences. Standards in punctuation, sentence structure and use of vocabulary are above average, though spelling is less consistent, especially in the work of boys.
85. Opportunities exist in many lessons across the curriculum for pupils to develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils are articulate and willing to sustain a conversation. Listening skills are strong in most subjects – notably so in music, drama, science and geography – and this has a very positive effect on learning. In some subjects – for example, mathematics, art and information and communications technology – there are not enough opportunities for pupils to answer questions at length. Pupils read text fluently and with clear understanding. In history, they study a range of challenging material, and in geography they read aloud willingly and accurately. However, in modern foreign languages, there are very few opportunities for private reading. Pupils generally write well in a variety of forms. In science, there is some extended writing, including creative work. In physical education, pupils studying for GCSE construct careful mock bids for staging the Olympic Games. In drama, GCSE students keep diaries reflecting on their practical work and this helps them to improve performance. Extended writing in history is well structured, with good vocabulary and sentence construction; spelling, however, is less consistent and not always corrected by teachers. In art, written appreciation of art work tends to be brief; there is not much extended writing. In information and communications technology, there are opportunities to redraft, and in geography to respond to worksheets, although, too often, only in brief sentences. In modern foreign languages, pupils do not have enough opportunity for extended writing, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and this holds back their progress. A very positive feature of many lessons is the inclusion of key words to extend pupils' vocabulary and understanding. In mathematics, in particular, teachers make very effective use of key words to reinforce pupils' understanding. Key words are used well in art, design and technology and music.

### **MATHEMATICS**

86. Overall, standards and pupils' achievement in mathematics are satisfactory throughout the school. At the end of Year 9 in 1999, the results of the National Curriculum tests in mathematics were in line with the average when compared with all schools nationally but below the average when compared with similar schools. Results in mathematics, although similar to those in English, were not as good as those in science. However, the test results in 2000 improved significantly to be well above the 1999 national average; pupils achieved well. Overall, girls performed better than the boys, although boys did better in the highest levels. Results at the end of Year 9 have improved steadily since the last inspection.
87. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades (A\*-C) in GCSE mathematics in 1999 was above average when compared both with all schools nationally and with similar schools. Boys performed better than girls in the highest grades (A\*/A). Pupils' results in mathematics were better than those in science but not as good as English. When their mathematics results are compared to their results in other subjects, boys tend to do better in mathematics and girls to do better in their other subjects. The GCSE results in 2000 dipped by almost half a grade, overall. While the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades (A\*-C) was close to the national average for recent years, the proportion of pupils across the full range of grades (A\*-G) was below average

because too many pupils failed to gain a grade. This was very different from the results for grades A\*-G in 1999, which were above the national average. The continuity of learning for pupils who entered GCSE in 2000 was interrupted by changes brought about by staff absence.

88. Results for A level in 2000 showed a marked improvement over results in earlier years. Previously, results had been consistently below average, when compared with schools nationally and, in 1999, less than half of the students gained a pass grade. With a change in the syllabus these results have been turned around and all students, bar one who failed to attend an examination, gained the pass grade (E) or higher. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades, (A, B), was well above the 1999 average for all schools. Overall, boys achieved marginally better than girls, although girls outperformed the boys at the highest grades.
89. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 in mathematics, although covering a wide range are, overall, in line with national expectations and higher-attaining pupils achieve above the expectation. By this stage, pupils have a sound understanding of number and competently use number operations. Lower-attaining pupils use computers to reinforce number skills and learn to discuss and share ideas in mathematics when given practical activities, for example, developing a board game. Pupils in the middle-ability classes use number principles in trial and improvement methods to find solutions to equations. Higher attaining pupils persevere with more challenging tasks and find solutions to simultaneous equations using both graphs and methods of elimination. Pupils make satisfactory progress across Years 7 to 9.
90. Overall standards in mathematics in Years 10 and 11 are above average; pupils are building well on their earlier work. Most pupils have a more secure grasp of number and use calculators proficiently. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, reinforce their understanding of number concepts through a variety of practical and group activities. Pupils in middle-attaining classes understand percentage and achieve some success in finding quadratic expressions by multiplying factors. Higher attaining pupils extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding of algebraic principles and solve more complex equations, quadratic and cubic, as well as successfully interpreting and sketching graphs.
91. Standards and achievement in the sixth form are in line with expectations for A level mathematics. Effective use is made of discussion. Students increase their understanding of how mathematics is used to help solve practical problems, for example, the concept of mathematical modelling, when considering problems relating to firing a shell from a cannon.
92. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and often better throughout, and, in Years 10 and 11 they are good. Teachers are well qualified, with good subject knowledge. They give competent explanations of the subject which help pupils' understanding. Their classroom management skills are very good and they develop good relationships with the pupils which help to create a harmonious learning environment in which the pupils learn and achieve well. For example, in a Year 10 class, the teacher's probing questions and clear explanations improved pupils' understanding and guided them to develop systematic methods to solve problems using diagrams. Occasionally, too much talking by the teacher limits pupils' achievement because they do not provide enough opportunities for the pupils to participate. Learning is regularly tested. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are comprehensive and the progress of individual pupils can be tracked throughout their time in school. Marks are recorded for pieces of coursework and for homework, which is set in accordance with the school's policy. The practice of using constructive comments on pupils' work to help them improve is not consistently applied. However, in the sixth form, students benefit from regular individual feedback on their progress from their teachers.
93. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good overall, and very good in two out of five lessons. Pupils are courteous, listen carefully to their teachers and concentrate well. They are proud of their achievements and written work, including diagrams, is clearly and neatly presented. Students in the sixth form take greater responsibility for their learning and join other lessons, as well as using lunchtimes, to improve their understanding of the subject.

94. The department is strongly led. Teamwork is good and there is a shared commitment within the team to raise the attainment levels of all pupils. Teachers work hard, share in the work of the department and give freely of their time. Satisfactory improvements to the curriculum have been implemented since the last inspection report. New texts have strengthened the continuity of learning and provided more challenging tasks for pupils, especially those who attain more highly. Teachers have developed more varied activities to interest and motivate pupils, especially those who work more slowly. Numeracy strategies implemented in Years 7 to 9 build on primary school practice and improve pupils' confidence and skill. Teachers have devised new programmes which are being used throughout the school to make more use of computers in mathematics to enhance pupils' learning. These initiatives are effectively improving pupils' interest and attainment. Accommodation is of high quality and is enhanced by interesting posters and display of pupils' work. The provision and quality of the learning resources are good.

### **Numeracy**

95. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory overall. Numeracy skills are being developed in mathematics throughout Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, pupils handle number operations with confidence and use calculators appropriately. By the time they reach Year 11, pupils use number in a greater variety of contexts; they illustrate data effectively using graphs, and use number operations in solving algebraic problems. Some weaknesses in calculations are evident in Years 10 and 11 when a minority of older pupils do not have access to calculators. Several other subjects use numbers effectively in their work. In design technology, students have a good understanding of geometrical shapes, employ measuring techniques and use calculators competently. Ideas of perspective, measurement, enlargement and geometric pattern are satisfactorily understood in art. Numeracy is promoted well in history through calculating intervals of time, both into the past and projecting forwards, and statistics and graphs are used to good effect. In science, calculations graphs and statistical methods are used in all years and standards are sound. The existing recommendations to improve numeracy across the curriculum are currently under review in the light of developments taking place in primary schools.

### **SCIENCE**

96. Pupils achieve well in science throughout the school. Standards in lessons and results are good by the time pupils are in Year 9 and enter GCSE, and in the sixth form they are in line with expectations for A level work.
97. The results of the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. The science results were better than those of English and mathematics. Boys' and girls' results were similar. The results in 2000 were even better.
98. Almost all pupils were entered for the GCSE double award in science in 1999. The results were above the national average but below the average for similar schools. (However, most other schools do not enter as many pupils as at Cardinal Griffin, often excluding about twenty per cent of their less able pupils.) In spite of the high entry policy, almost all pupils, including many with special educational needs, obtained a GCSE grade. Boys did a little better than girls. Science results were similar to those of English and mathematics. In 2000, pupils were entered for either the double or single GCSE science award. Overall, the proportion of the higher grades (A\*-C) was similar to 1999.
99. The proportion of students who achieved a pass grade (A to E) in A level science subjects (biology, chemistry and physics) in 1999 was in line with the national average, overall. In biology and chemistry, the proportion of students who gained a higher grade (A or B) was average, and a little better than in physics. Boys' and girls' results were similar for physics and chemistry and girls did well in biology. The results in 2000 were similar.

100. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is average. Current Year 9 pupils are on target to reach above average levels at the end of the school year, indicating that they have made good progress since they entered Cardinal Griffin. In Year 7, pupils can identify safety hazards from a diagram and are able to name a range of laboratory equipment correctly. They have begun to appreciate the importance of proportion in diagrams by trying to draw a Bunsen burner accurately. Memorable demonstrations and an interesting video helped a lower set of Year 9 to learn the properties of metals and identify differences in the reactions of metals with water. Pupils of average attainment in Year 9 know the terms associated with the reactivity series of metals but most are unsure of the concept underlying the order of reactivity of metals and some are unsure of the idea of the state of matter. Clear learning objectives, the use of a range of resources and high expectations helped higher ability pupils in Year 9 to explain the term pressure and to manipulate formulae to calculate mass, force or pressure using the correct units. The teacher encouraged pupils to use mental arithmetic rather than a calculator when dealing with simple calculations.
101. Year 11 pupils are on target to reach above average levels by the end of the school year. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 have good knowledge and understanding, as observed in a lesson on helpful and harmful substances where the teacher's good subject knowledge enabled the pupils to learn about the immune system. The teacher's enthusiasm created a very good rapport with the pupils that made them want to learn. Pupils understand both how to carry out a practical exercise and the underlying scientific principles, due to clear demonstration and careful briefing. Year 11 pupils understand Ohm's Law and can manipulate related formulae confidently. They can plot a graph of the voltage against the current accurately and are able to explain what it represents in precise terms. Pupils' lack of proficiency in using information and communications technology to learn science was illustrated by lower ability pupils in Year 10 who had difficulty in using a CD-Rom to extract and collate information about metals.
102. Year 13 students studying A level science subjects are on target to achieve average results at the end of the year. Presentations by Year 13 students indicate a good standard of biological research, but did not give rise to much class discussion. Year 13 chemistry students were observed carrying out an assessed practical involving steam distillation and purification competently, albeit rather slowly. In physics, Year 13 students are able to derive the relevant mathematical formulae associated with simple harmonic motion. Students in Year 12 achieve in line with expectations for the start of an A level course. For example, in biology they can correctly identify and compare different types of cells from microscope slides and electron micrographs.
103. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall; they are good in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth-form and very good in Years 10 to 11. Such good teaching, combined with the positive attitudes of pupils, and their good behaviour, explain why pupils' achievement in science is good throughout the school. The teachers' very good knowledge and understanding helps them to devise lessons that interest pupils and focus on what they need to learn as observed, for example, in a sixth-form lesson on mass spectrometry including an exercise and oral questions which helped students to understand the topic and also dealt with their misconceptions. Standards in A level biology are raised by the teacher's high expectations, for example, students were expected to research, use the library and read a biological journal to extend their knowledge. Teaching methods are used very effectively, including clear explanations which extend and deepen pupils' understanding. Excellent rapport with pupils in a Year 11 science lesson, which included a variety of practical and theoretical activities, maintained the interest of pupils and made them want to learn. Many lessons proceed at a brisk pace which increases the amount pupils learn. In a Year 10 class, the teacher used a wide variety of resources including books, demonstrations and a video to teach about convection. Pupils had to answer a series of written questions on the video, which ensured that they concentrated properly and also reinforced their learning. Support teachers and assistants give very effective support for pupils with special educational needs. For example, twelve Year 8 pupils with special needs were able to record keywords, make notes and construct a model of the arm because of such help.
104. Although literacy and numeracy are well developed and pupils achieve good standards, there is room to increase the extent to which information and communications technology is used.

Opportunities to create links between units of study and to reinforce scientific concepts and ideas are not always taken. Greater use of the library and more tasks which require pupils to develop their research skills rather than complete worksheets, would help them to deepen their understanding of scientific ideas and their awareness of applications.

105. The department is very well led and managed. Standards of teaching and learning and attainment are systematically monitored and evaluated and very effective action is taken when required. Teachers and technicians work well together to develop the curriculum, produce learning materials, share resources and ensure health and safety. The match between the teachers' qualifications and the needs of the curriculum is excellent. Pupils' learning is disrupted by the need for a room rota because there are not enough laboratories to accommodate all classes.
106. Since the last inspection, results at all levels have improved. For example, GCSE results in 1995 were below average and are now above average; A level results were low and they are now average. A new scheme of work has been devised which develops understanding of scientific enquiry through contexts taken from different aspects of science (including living things, materials and physical processes), and thus tackles a criticism in the last inspection report.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

107. Standards and achievement in information and communications technology are broadly average. Assessments and examination results have been good in some years. However, the use of information and communications technology is still patchy in other subjects (this was an area for improvement in the last report) and does not support pupils' learning as strongly as it could: it remains an area for improvement across the curriculum.
108. The attainment of younger pupils in information and communications technology is broadly average and pupils in Year 9 are in line to reach national expectations by the end of the year. They are competent in the general use of computers and various aspects of word processing. Many are also able to access information on CD-Roms and on the Internet, and a few can do so thoughtfully. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in recent years have fluctuated greatly, from well above to well below national expectations.
109. In recent years results of GCSE have also fluctuated and show no general trend. However, the numbers of pupils achieving the higher grades (A\*-C) have usually been well above national levels and are better than at the last inspection. In their lessons, folders and displays, the work of those pupils in Years 10 and 11 preparing for GCSE generally meets expectations. However, pupils' computing and communications skills tend to be better than their background knowledge, which is almost always better than their understanding. Too much of their work is word processing and the indiscriminate use of electronic information sources. While nearly all pupils know many ways to change the look of a document, few recognise that it is the content which matters and that the look should not come first or be a barrier to effective communication.
110. Each year some pupils also enter GCSE in business studies; here, too, the numbers reaching the higher grades (A\*-C) show no consistency, though they rarely surpass national levels. In the classes seen leading to GCSE, the general knowledge and understanding of the principles of the subject were variable: in one case low (concerning cash in/outflow, financing and banking) and in another case good (in a lesson about the nature and early development of small businesses).
111. The only information and communications technology currently offered to the school's sixth form students comes within the key skills area. This is very newly introduced. However, many sixth-formers are familiar with the use of computers, do good work with them, and see their value – although, again, during the inspection they were largely used for word processing. In the past, students entered for A level have achieved well.
112. Overall, the quality of teaching information and communications technology is good, and the teaching of business studies is satisfactory, although there are some weaker aspects. Almost all

lessons were planned well and thoroughly; however, there is little use of specific learning objectives - this makes it harder to meet the needs of all learners, in particular the most talented and those who do not find learning easy. The mix of theory and practice within lessons is generally appropriate, and lessons include a good range of styles and techniques. The information and communications technology teachers often bring into their lessons clear examples of business practice and thinking and make very good use of questions to reinforce pupils' understanding, both in lessons (for example, at the beginning or at the end) and when working with individuals. In business studies, the use of discussion to develop understanding of commercial practice is highly effective in small groups. Some challenging and relevant work is planned, leading to good learning and understanding of small businesses by the whole class. Occasionally, expectations slip and pupils are insufficiently challenged, which affects their learning and the progress they make. Teacher-pupil relationships are universally a strength, and classes in even the most difficult of situations (such as great over-crowding) are well managed.

113. Throughout the school, including in the sixth form, pupils have good and positive attitudes to information and communications technology, and a widespread realisation that it can offer most people a highly effective tool for most activities, including learning. In all the lessons seen - and in all the computing areas outside of lesson time, where learners had dropped in to use the systems for their work – pupils showed much determination to present work well, and behaviour was good. These good attitudes and behaviour improve pupils' learning. Through the use of information and communications technology pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, develop effective independent learning skills: their use of CD-Roms and the Internet are becoming more and more focused, and they are more and more able to select from the material they find, and to evaluate that material as well as their own work. The quality of their learning is good.
114. While teaching and learning are generally good in information and communications technology lessons, pupils' overall progress is affected by several constraints. Significantly, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology in other subjects and thus to practise, explore and extend their skills. Assessment systems have not been developed to take account of the achievements pupils make in information and communications technology across the curriculum. Since the last inspection, the school has spent a lot of money on hardware and systems, and these are appreciated by the pupils and their parents. Yet computers are still shared in classes of younger pupils (Years 7 to 9) and in some in higher years. During the inspection pupils' use of computers was hampered by problems encountered with the school's main network and access to CD-Roms and the Internet. There is scope for exploring more fully pupils' use of computers at home and their use of school facilities which can be accessed on a drop-in basis, to support their learning.
115. At the time of the last inspection, insufficient opportunity for the use of information and communications technology and learning in other subject areas, and through access outside lesson times, was a weakness, and it is still not good enough to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The head of department has successfully established the subject in its own right. More needs to be done to focus and guide the school's development of information and communications technology as a tool for teaching and learning in all the other subjects.

## **ART**

116. Standards in art are well above average and many pupils achieve highly, especially in results at GCSE and at A level. Art is a strength of the school.
117. Standards in art and design are above the national expectation by the end of Year 9, and are well above the national averages at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Fewer boys than girls opt to study the subject for examinations, and girls' performance is better than boys'. Standards, at all levels, show a steady improvement since the last inspection, and pupils' examination results in art and design GCSE, and at A level, are better than in most of their other school subjects. Standards in lessons are generally high and in line with results. Learning is thorough and supports pupils' progress which is good throughout.

118. In Years 7 to 9, carefully considered programmes of study enable students to learn about and use line, tone, pattern, texture, and colour with increasing confidence. Year 7 pupils, for example, research the characteristics of aboriginal art, creating line patterns based on these studies, and drawings of their own hands. They build these into exciting and beautifully presented collages, and card constructions: they achieve well. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 produce increasingly more detailed and analytical observational drawings of natural forms and man-made objects such as fir cones, shells and rope. These show very good understanding of how elements of art can be used to communicate the properties and structure of objects, for example the skeletal form of decaying leaves. Pupils' appreciation of the way in which their studies, and practical work, are related to the work of well-known artists, art movements and other cultures helps them to do well: their work exceeds national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs generally work well. They achieve standards which are good for them and some individuals achieve high standards. They enjoy the visual, creative, and practical nature of the subject. All pupils make good progress.
119. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 build well on their earlier work, using established procedures of starting with analytical observational drawings, developing abstract ideas, and finishing two- and three-dimensional work to a high standard. A strong feature of their work is the use of very basic materials to create exquisite objects. Decorative boxes, head gear and shoes, for example, are made from card, glue and string. Pupils often use the styles and techniques of other artists to develop original and exciting art and design work of their own. Pupils know what is required to achieve the highest grades, and use self-evaluation effectively, as an ongoing process during practical work, and through annotated sketches in sketchbooks, and preparatory design sheets. These attributes and achievements are successfully extended in the sixth form, where courses are intensive and demanding. Exacting and precise batik designs on silk demonstrate clear understanding of design concepts, with strong yet highly selective colour work, and bold composition: standards are high.
120. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are keen to learn about the subject, they concentrate on their work well and enjoy the challenges that are set. Much observational drawing takes place in silent concentration. Pupils take pride in their achievements and their behaviour in lessons is very good. Response and attitudes to the subject are often excellent in examination groups from Year 10 through into the sixth form.
121. The quality of teaching, at all stages, is predominantly very good, never less than good, and some is excellent. Teachers have substantial experience and knowledge of the subject, especially in drawing, design, and textiles. This is reflected in impeccable lesson planning and a sequential course structure which provides a rich programme of study throughout the school. High expectations, which are taken for granted in all matters, help pupils to give of their best. Methods to achieve effective learning are very carefully thought through and the stimulating and extremely well-presented lesson introductions and demonstrations help pupils to understand what is expected of them and how to do well. Informative displays of pupils' work mirror and reinforce high standards and build up pupils' confidence. Oral assessment of work in progress, and homework, are used well to extend learning although, often, marking in sketchbooks does not include sufficient indication of how work might be improved. Question-and-answer sessions are generally effective, but could be extended in some instances to give pupils and students more opportunity to express their own ideas. Written work and information and communications technology are little used to raise standards in art. Teachers cater well for pupils with special educational needs through well-judged supportive comments, the use of individual educational plans, and of key words. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and provided with appropriately challenging tasks. Teachers have established efficient and safe procedures for storing and handling art materials, within the considerable constraints of large class sizes and limited accommodation.
122. The department is very well led and good teamwork promotes excellence in all things. Areas for improvement identified in the subject development plans include the expansion of the subject to provide greater curricular breadth, with the development of information and communications technology as a priority. In this respect, statutory curriculum requirements are not fully met.

Further staff training is needed, as well as learning resources, and space - the present accommodation is becoming inadequate for the increased numbers in the sixth form. Other deficiencies include the lack of assessment procedures which take into account the new National Curriculum levels, and insufficient use of results and information on pupils' attainment to guide planning. There is no technician support and no learning support assistance to help in large mixed-ability classes. However, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and standards have improved steadily since the last inspection report.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

123. Standards in design and technology are good: pupils achieve well on the whole. Their attainment at the end of Year 9 in design and technology is above the national expectation which is an improvement since the last inspection. They display a range of skills across the activities offered within the design and technology area. Levels of attainment in textiles and graphics are high, with good design and craft skills evident in cutting and shaping resistant materials as seen, for example, among Year 8 pupils who used hacksaws and forging to shape a metal bar to a specified end-section. In food technology lessons, pupils show skill in mixing ingredients, preparing food, analysing nutritional characteristics and working to a brief which includes making design decisions. Year 9 pupils were observed working very well, with good attention to hygiene, when making 'home made' scones which they compared with commercially produced scones. Information and communications technology is used appropriately in most areas and pupils show confidence in its application. Good progress is made across Years 7 to 9 by boys and girls alike and by pupils at all levels of attainment. Their good rate of progress is assisted by the high levels of interest they show and their commitment and good behaviour. Their attitudes are good. In lessons they are responsive, and concentrate well throughout, which results in effective learning. The well planned, varied curriculum provides increasing challenge as pupils move through the different activities in the design and technology syllabus.
124. Attainment in lessons and the work seen of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is generally above national expectations. Year 10 pupils, for example, develop skills in the measuring and marking out of timber using mortise gauges; their cutting and shaping of wood for their trays was above average. In textiles, Year 10 pupils have good understanding of different ways of making seams and implications for production processes. At the beginning of Year 11, pupils make a good start in planning their own research project. GCSE results, for design and technology subjects overall, are above the national average. In the most recent year, boys gained better grades than girls. Success varies across design and technology subjects, the best results being gained in textiles and graphics, where results are high. GCSE coursework in graphics includes good lettering and lay-out; drawing and illustration are of good quality, across the ability range. In resistant materials, although overall results have been about average, there is marked disparity in the results of different classes. In food technology, pupils' results have been well below average. These differences reflect, in some instances, the composition of groups and, in others, curricular problems which have now been resolved; staffing arrangements have been addressed and changes made in the current year. Good work is evident in the newly re-introduced child development option and the vocational course in engineering, which is offered at foundation level.
125. Progress in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is good and, as with younger classes, is helped by pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes in class. Good progress over time is aided by good curricular planning which allows skills and understanding acquired lower down the school to be built upon in a progressive manner. Pupils at all levels of attainment are suitably challenged by projects which allow for varying degrees of successful completion. Boys and girls work and achieve equally well in lessons. Information and communications technology is used competently in projects as appropriate, and enhances presentation.
126. Graphics has recently been introduced into the sixth form and students have achieved well at Advanced Supplementary level. Students have not yet taken full A level examinations but evidence seen during the inspection shows good attainment in pursuing individual projects and



good progress from previous levels of attainment. The sixth formers have a mature approach to study and well developed research skills. They discuss their work seriously and intelligently.

127. The good quality of teaching is an important feature of the work of the department. Consistent strengths are thorough preparation, both of lesson plans and also of classrooms, materials and resources. The pace of lessons is good, which impacts on the pace of learning. Further strengths are sensitivity to individual pupil needs, which promotes good learning by pupils at all levels of attainment, and effective reference to other subject areas. The use of language in design and technology is considered carefully as terms arise in discussion. The origin of specialist terms is explored, as well as the structure of language in general use. For example, the function of adjectives in geometry reinforces pupils' understanding of graphics. Specialist mathematical terms, such as 'quadrilateral', are dwelt upon as they arise, with explanations of their classical origin. This strategy reinforces learning generally and sets an appropriately disciplined framework for the development of understanding in a subject area in which specialist terms abound. Teachers' subject expertise is good and versatility is evident in the quality of individual help and tuition given to pupils. Assessment is thorough and regular and record-keeping is good. The work of pupils with special educational needs is carefully planned and monitored. Comparative weaknesses in the teaching are very few; they include the occasional failure to ensure that pupils fully understand the nature of their task.
128. The curriculum is broad and varied providing the full range of activities associated with design and technology activities. The newly introduced vocational courses on child development and engineering have extended the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and the recently formed sixth form graphics course provides for progression of skill and understanding from Year 7 to sixth form. The use of information and communications technology in the area of control can be strengthened. Extra-curricular opportunities are good, with workrooms generally being available with teacher support at lunchtimes. The design and technology club meets at least once each week.
129. The department is well managed and co-ordinated with forward-looking leadership. Relationships between staff are good and there is a shared sense of purpose. Documentation is relevant and informative. The teachers in the department are properly qualified with a range of specialisms and relevant experience. The full-time technician is also a qualified teacher and he contributes significantly to the teaching of the department. An important asset is the new specialist accommodation for design and technology. This provides a suite of spacious rooms which are well furnished and colourfully decorated. The learning environment afforded by this major investment by the school is a clear impetus to learning and enjoyment of the subject.

## GEOGRAPHY

130. Standards in geography are good: generally pupils achieve well, throughout the school. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have fluctuated, but in lessons and work seen standards are a little above the national average, and by the end of Year 11 attainment is above average. Results in geography in the GCSE examination are generally well above the national average. In 1999, girls attained more highly than boys, although both were well above the national average and pupils achieved better in geography than in most subjects of the curriculum. However, results were lower in 2000 when they were broadly in line with the national average of recent years. Changes to the school's arrangements for choosing subjects contributed to this. Standards in the sixth form are appropriate for the A level courses and consistent with examination results which are generally above the national average, with every student in most years achieving a pass grade or better. Whilst, in the last two years, the percentage of students attaining the highest (A, B) grades has dipped, the grades achieved in 2000 represent good progress for the students on the course.
131. Geographical skills are effectively promoted among pupils in Years 7 to 9. In Year 7, they consolidate their mapping skills as they plot data onto a map of the school. Pupils in Year 8 extend their mapping skills as they draw a map to show the density of people on a beach, which introduces them to ideas about the uneven distribution of the world's population. Enquiry skills are developed effectively through a range of activities: Year 8 pupils make satisfactory collections of information about their families' movements, during the topic of migration, and in Year 9 they develop generally good levels of understanding of why temperatures vary, both within the United Kingdom and globally. Pupils are introduced to and use a good subject vocabulary, helped by the use of key words which are displayed in all rooms. Older pupils use evidence from a variety of sources to make decisions about location. For example, in Year 11 they use Ordnance Survey maps effectively to make and justify decisions about the location of an industrial estate. Lower attaining pupils use graphical skills effectively, for example, to show changes in employment over time; they offer some explanations for the changes, although their written work often lacks detail. In the sixth form, students working on A level courses use an impressive range of methods to collect and present data for their individual studies. Many make good use of their information and communication skills to present their projects and use the Internet to find up-to-date information. They demonstrate a sound grasp of environmental issues, such as the need to manage fragile ecosystems.
132. The quality of teaching is mostly good; all is at least satisfactory and it is consistently good in the sixth form. Many good features have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge so that explanations are clear, and contribute well to pupils' understanding. Preparation for examinations is thorough, with well-produced booklets to guide coursework. The work is well planned both for individual lessons and for a sequence of lessons, so that skills and understanding are steadily developed and built upon. In a very good Year 10 lesson, lower attaining pupils acquired and used a sound subject vocabulary to describe population changes. They made good use of graphs showing population pyramids to extract information and demonstrated their understanding by matching written statements to appropriate parts of the graphs. The work was well planned and matched to the needs of the group. Teachers' use of questions is generally effective in checking pupils' understanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' good behaviour and efforts. Relationships in classrooms are good; teachers are approachable and helpful. Discipline is firm and fair, eliciting good responses and good behaviour from almost all pupils so that lesson time is well used for learning. Pupils concentrate well on their work and try hard to present it neatly. Teachers use a range of methods to vary the work and pupils respond with interest to group work and practical activities. The programme is enriched by fieldwork, which makes effective use of the extensive school site. Sixth form teaching is good with appropriate emphasis on the development of students' study skills. Teachers promote good independent learning skills through the use of group work. For example, Year 13 students discussed in groups the effects of human activities on a stretch of coastal sand-dunes and suggested how the area might be managed to protect it from erosion. An aspect for improvement concerns the challenge presented to all pupils in Years 7 to 9. In most lessons, all pupils do the same work and this does not stretch the most able in the group.

Although there are opportunities for extended writing and independent research through the year, many lessons rely heavily on worksheets. These are usually of good quality and provide good support for less highly attaining pupils, enabling them to keep up with the work of the class and so make good progress in their learning. However, the short written responses do not offer enough challenge for more highly attaining pupils. Homework is regularly set and well planned to extend pupils' learning. Marking is regular; some written comments are perceptive and helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work; others, whilst encouraging effort, give less detail about improvement.

133. The department is ably led and the work is well co-ordinated. Teachers work well as a team. Initiatives to raise the achievement of boys are being implemented with some success. The recent review of the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has identified areas for improvement, including the need to match the work more closely to the range of pupils' needs within the group. The department has made satisfactory progress in modifying schemes of work to meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum, and the new A level examinations. Since the last inspection the department has succeeded in maintaining good standards of achievement and generally good teaching.

## **HISTORY**

134. Pupils' achievement in history is good, overall, bearing in mind their level of attainment on entry to the school. At the end of Year 9, their attainment is above national expectations. In lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11, pupils are in line to achieve average standards by the end of Year 11. GCSE results were above the national average in 1999, and although they were not quite as good in 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades (A\*-C) was similar to the 1999 national average. Girls' results are consistently better than boys, although both boys and girls do as well in history as in their other subjects. Since the last inspection, GCSE results have improved.
135. Results at A level fluctuate considerably: in 1999 no pupils gained the highest (A, B) grades, but in 2000 half of the students entered did so, and the remainder obtained grade C. In sixth form lessons, achievement is broadly in line with expectations; students build effectively on their earlier work.
136. The generally good standards achieved result from effective teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed a good basis of historical knowledge and understanding. Their understanding of chronology is very secure and they use dates accurately. Pupils know and use historical terms and specialised vocabulary - such as conscription and British Expeditionary Force - confidently. When studying World War 1, they grasp that it was caused by multiple factors. Examples of good extended writing were seen from all pupils, except those with special educational needs. On occasion, these pupils write with some fluency and coherence, but it is not sustained.
137. By the end of Year 11, pupils compare sources of evidence and comment on their reliability, for example, they grasp the idea of propaganda, in lessons on the Depression. Higher attaining pupils link this to their own knowledge of the topic to offer a detailed and balanced opinion. Pupils understand context well and look for links and patterns. Their knowledge is secure and reinforced by good revision skills. Written skills have developed further so that pupils have no difficulty with coursework. Despite wide vocabularies, boys' writing skills are weaker and this affects their grades. Careful presentation of work is a consistent feature of all the work seen.
138. In the sixth form, students continue to build on their skills. They work systematically and their folders are well organised, so that reference and revision are easier. Students have a competent, descriptive understanding of the periods studied, but find analytical skills hard to develop. They write descriptively rather than evaluatively.

139. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very positive. They arrive punctually for lessons, expecting to work throughout. Concentration is good and, even during group work, they stay focused on the task. They listen well to their teachers and respond to the purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. These very good qualities contribute significantly to the good progress they make.
140. Teaching and learning are mostly good, never unsatisfactory and in a substantial number of lessons they are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which is used to question pupils effectively or to convey the flavour of an historical event. A vivid description of Archduke Ferdinand's assassination commanded the attention of Year 9 pupils, who were learning about the First World War. Teachers pay great attention, particularly at the start of the year, to classroom routines so that time is not wasted and all can work productively. Great emphasis is placed on effective use of vocabulary, and teachers make sure that pupils can understand and remember new words, and also recall recent topics. Teachers make sure that concepts are fully understood, for example, by illustration, through role-play and by drawing on their own experience. In most lessons, pupils are challenged by the good pace maintained by teachers, for examples, by using timed questions. Pupils are set problems to solve and learn effectively through small group discussions, as observed in a Year 10 lesson, when pupils argued logically, listened to each others' points of view and made good progress in understanding the reasons why the Great Powers became rivals in the Second World War. Their learning was very good. Pupils with special educational needs consistently receive extra attention and, when appropriate, are well supported by learning support assistants and so they are helped to keep up with the class. In Years 7 to 9, pupils could benefit from further help with their writing so all extended assignments can be completed. Homework is regularly set and marked but written comments do not always explain how pupils can improve further.
141. Clear educational direction has created a strong ethos for learning, and the values of the school are reflected in lessons and the classroom displays. The department has begun to use school assessment data and to build up its own records, but it is still developing ways of using this fully in Years 7 to 9. Information and communications technology is included in the scheme of work for each year, but outdated software sometimes limits the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Research skills are fostered throughout and the library is well used. Some local history is now studied but there are no visits to enrich pupils' experiences further and this is an area for development. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good as overall standards have been maintained and raised in Years 10 and 11, whilst curriculum provision, including the use of computers and of the library, has been extended.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

142. Pupils study either French or German from Year 7. The more able in each half-year group study both languages in Year 9 and can elect to continue to study two languages up to GCSE, although few do so. Both languages are provided in the sixth form, where small numbers follow courses to A level.
143. Pupils reach average standards in modern foreign languages by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Standards and achievement are below national expectations at the end of Year 9. The high standards reported at the last inspection have not been maintained. Leadership is new and the new head of department has initiated prompt improvements.
144. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in modern foreign languages is below national expectations; there is no significant difference between boys and girls. Pupils make better progress in French than in German. Standards in speaking and listening are average and many pupils, at all levels of attainment, speak confidently and with good accent. They maintain exchanges of three to four utterances, but often make basic errors which confuse meaning. Speaking and listening dominate lessons. Opportunities for individual reading are scarce, though most pupils reach a satisfactory standard by the end of the key stage. Writing is the weakest area and seriously underdeveloped, especially in German. Pupils have very few opportunities for personal or creative writing, and too much work is limited to worksheets, many of which offer very little challenge, and the more able

pupils are not extended. Pupils with special educational needs make average progress in line with others in their groups, but work is rarely adapted to their needs.

145. By the end of Year 11, attainment is average overall. GCSE results in the higher grades in French were well above the national average in 1999, with boys achieving above, and girls achieving well above, the national averages for boys and girls respectively. In German, results at the higher grades (A\*-C) were well below the national average, for both boys and girls. Pupils did slightly better in French but not as well in German as in their other school subjects. Only 75 per cent of pupils were entered for GCSE, but all who were entered gained a grade. Results in 2000 dropped sharply in French, to be close to the national average for 1999, whilst German results improved slightly but remained below the national average for 1999. Overall, there has been a decline in results since the previous inspection. Standards in lessons and other work seen are average. Writing has improved from a low threshold, so that coursework produced by average and lower ability pupils contains good features. High attaining pupils write in different tenses and begin to produce reasonably accurate letters, descriptions and accounts, though these are often based on models. Speaking skills develop satisfactorily, but no sustained conversation was observed. Pupils listen well and can identify key details in much of what they hear, though this skill is less well developed in German. Despite scant opportunities to read extended texts, pupils make adequate progress in reading, which is the best skill area in GCSE examinations.
146. Results at A level were a little below average in 1999 for the small numbers entered. A few more candidates in 2000 gained results in French which showed a slight decline, but results in German were disappointing. Only one student has embarked on an A level course this year. In the upper sixth, standards are average, and progress is satisfactory from GCSE grades. Some oral work is very good, and satisfactory progress is being made in comprehension skills. In written work, the content is impressive in essays on diverse topics, such as the influences on children in Nazi Germany, the lifestyle of old people, Louis Pasteur and the different attitudes of men and women. Students use modern technology well to research these topics. However, in many cases the language used is prone to careless errors which diminish the quality of the work.
147. Attitudes to learning a modern foreign language are largely positive, and in the sixth form and some groups in Years 10 and 11 they are excellent. Behaviour is universally good. While there are occasional examples of chatter, teachers manage all classes with an easy authority without being oppressive. In several lessons, the learning atmosphere was enhanced by the good humour of both teachers and pupils. Pupils' relationships with teachers and each other are very good and have a positive impact on learning. The high level of attendance promotes good progress. Students in the sixth form show initiative in research for their work, but pupils lower down have few such opportunities. Some of the coursework produced by Year 11 pupils is commendable, and indicates that this is an area of personal development in which there is scope for improvement.
148. Although there are some criticisms of planning over time, the teaching seen in lessons is good, and sometimes very good, especially in the sixth form: no lessons were unsatisfactory. All five teachers offer both French and German to a good standard. They use the foreign language consistently in lessons and encourage pupils to do likewise, often insisting on a foreign language version of what the pupil has said in English; pupils acquire good accents and speak confidently. This approach is also well rewarded in the sixth form, where no English is tolerated. Planning for individual lessons is good, including for the long double periods, which tax the concentration of both pupils and teachers. Pupils enjoy and learn from a variety of activities conducted at good pace. In a Year 9 French lesson, pupils responded to questions from the teacher, worked in pairs to match words, then participated in an interesting quiz designed to make them answer in French. However, there is a sameness in lesson routines which, reiterated over time, begin to pall. The challenge in some activities, for example form-filling, fails to accelerate the learning of more able pupils in Years 7 to 9. Similarly, less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, find themselves in mixed groups in Years 8 and 9, in which the work is not always well matched to their ability. Relatively little use is made of overhead projectors, computers, video and reading schemes which would help to vary the diet, and enthuse pupils even more. Where the overhead projector was seen in use, for example in Year 8 German lessons on the topic of school, a greater range of oral activities ensued. The attention of pupils, too easily satisfied with their

success in coping with straightforward worksheets, occasionally drifts. The language laboratory is a good facility, which is sometimes well used, but better progress might be achieved through its replacement by more adaptable and mobile listening hardware. The management of pupils is impeccable, and fosters good relationships and progress within lessons. Marking is up to date. In Years 7 to 9, largely due to the primacy of worksheets, marking is perfunctory, but it improves in Years 10 and 11, where there are some helpful comments. In the sixth form, marking is good and reflects examination criteria. Homework is set regularly. It complements work in lessons, but the opportunity to extend the more able is rarely taken, whilst the less able get the same homework as their classmates.

149. At the last inspection the department was well led. Since then there have been weaknesses and changes in management which have led to falling standards. Though the monitoring of lessons has taken place, this has not been followed through within a structure which would lead to subsequent evaluation and identification of professional development needs, so that it has had little impact on teaching and learning. Assessment procedures, especially in Years 7 to 9, have been unsatisfactory, leading to inflated teacher assessments, which have then been reported to parents. Pupils tend to deduce their progress from the marks they gain. There is no embedded system for monitoring and supporting their progress through sharing assessment information or setting targets for improvement. The key documents, the schemes of work and the departmental development plan have not focused sufficiently on raising standards of teaching and learning. The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, and the end of key stage examinations, do not allow for adequate progression through National Curriculum levels.
150. Accommodation, which was criticised in the last inspection report, has been improved, although there are still problems in this area, which can have a negative impact on learning. In one Year 11 German lesson, well managed by the teacher, time was lost whilst pupils went out into the adjoining foyer to conduct a class survey, which would have been impossible in the cramped classroom. The work of the subject is well supported by visits to Normandy and the Mosel valley, the quality of which are popular with pupils and appreciated by parents. Sixth formers have opportunities to do work experience in both France and Germany.
151. Though standards in classroom teaching and pupils' attitudes have remained good since the last inspection and GCSE results are about average, overall there has been a decline in standards. Senior management has intervened to strengthen the department. To effect improvement, the department must improve procedures for recording and using assessments to raise standards; it must overhaul its documentation, especially for Years 7 to 9; and the monitoring of the work of the department must be more thorough and have an impact on learning. A new head of department has made an encouraging start with initial changes to the schemes of work and a draft development plan.

## **MUSIC**

152. High standards are achieved in music which contributes strongly to the ethos of the school. Pupils do very well in music examinations. In the last two years large numbers of pupils have taken GCSE and results have been high: almost three-quarters of those entered have achieved the highest (A\*, A) grades. Small groups of students have entered A level examinations in the last two years and their results have been well above average, with some high grades.
153. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have attained at least average levels across a restricted range of the National Curriculum: elements of vocal techniques and information and communications technology are in the process of being developed by the school. Teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 in both 1999 and 2000 show a very high percentage of pupils achieving the expectation or beyond, with a significant number achieving exceptional performance. However, these were over-optimistic, because of teachers' lack of familiarity with the criteria.
154. Pupils enter the school with gaps in their knowledge but some of these are quickly addressed in Year 7 as they begin to make progress. For instance, working in small groups and in the course

of a single lesson, pupils created simple percussive sounds which they organised and synchronised to compose a short rhythmic piece: they made good progress in composition and performance. It was clear that a number of pupils were successfully transferring the skills they had learned at primary schools. They are making good progress in listening and most can skilfully describe their feelings in response to music such as *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Dukas, which was new to them. Keeping listening records and writing short evaluations of pieces assist the development of pupils' listening skills. The quality of singing was good when it was observed in lessons and during extra-curricular activities, such as choir rehearsals. Overall, however, vocal techniques are little developed and the broad range of information and communications technology skills required by the National Curriculum is not yet in place: these are areas for development. By the time they reach Year 9, pupils have a secure knowledge of rhythm and pitch and the great majority can write down simple tunes in note form. Most pupils at the start of Year 9 are on course to achieve average levels by the end of the year, although currently there are gaps in learning including the development of a broader base of skills for those pupils with very high instrumental ability. Pupils' evaluation of each module of work through self-assessment is good and they are aware of the progress they are making during the year through ongoing verbal teacher assessments. Overall, progress across Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory in music.

155. The numbers of pupils choosing to study for GCSE are relatively large. At the time of the inspection, the work of most Year 11 pupils was well above average because of their high instrumental ability. Lower attaining pupils find composition difficult; a more supportive approach to this would help to speed up their progress. Overall, pupils competently develop musical ideas, working in partnership with each other in solo and ensemble work on a range of instruments which include violin, saxophone, guitar, electronic keyboard, voice and piano. The standards they achieve are above average. Progress across Years 10 and 11 is good.
156. Students in Years 12 and 13 working towards A level compose and perform in a range of styles. Year 13 students have a sound understanding of the structures of music and study, for example, the *Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky, in which they find the orchestration challenging, in comparison with Brahms. Students' ability to write extended essays, about a Brahms symphony or the Romantic period, is improving satisfactorily. Students recognise musical intervals through remembering the beginning of a song and most can write out short tunes and phrases easily. They are making good progress in the more advanced listening techniques needed at A level. Year 12 students, at the start of their sixth form course, were beginning to study the origins of jazz, and some were able to improvise a short piece in three parts during the lesson, successfully using the 'blues' scale and supporting chord structure: this demonstrates good progress. However, there is little use of musical technology in the examination groups and this is an area for development. Target-setting for students on all examination courses, in performance and composition, is helping students to meet deadlines and achieve high grades.
157. Pupils' attitudes to their work, to each other and to their teachers are excellent, both in the classroom and at extra-curricular activities. Their attitudes contribute well to the good progress they make. They are dedicated, reliable and responsible and are a credit to the school. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in lessons, and some excel in instrumental technique. Gifted pupils or students with higher levels of instrumental skill are always challenged at their own level. All pupils have equal opportunity to succeed and there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at any stage.
158. Extra-curricular musical activities remain outstanding, as at the time of the last inspection, and pupil participation is high. Instrumental teaching is good. The range of opportunities for both instrumentalists and non-instrumentalists is extensive. For instance, the two school choirs, guitar club and school shows are open to all. The junior and senior bands, string groups, wind ensembles, swing, jazz and rock bands, school orchestra and Irish band provide a variety of styles of music which support the development of instrumental skills. In addition to performing at masses, recorder festivals, school concerts and shows there have been a variety of annual foreign musical tours. The last visit was to Germany and the Black Forest. Performances, for instance at local seniors' residences and primary schools, combined with visits to shows such as *Les*

*Miserables*, complete an extensive array of musical activities. Parents are supportive and appreciate the very good quality of music in the school.

159. The quality of teaching throughout the school is mostly very good. This results in very good learning in most lessons. In two lessons, where teaching was just satisfactory, the pace was slow or structured support in composing was lacking for a few lower achieving pupils (in Year 11). As recommended in the last report, different tasks are provided in most practical areas and these are suitable for those pupils who also require them. In addition, as part of the development of key skills, technical language is clearly explained. A literacy policy in music is being developed to extend these concepts. The very good relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of the supportive and productive learning environment that prevails in the department. Teachers know their pupils well, which contributes significantly to the excellent standards of behaviour and the high levels of participation in lessons and in extra-curricular activities observed during the inspection. The management and organisation of pupils are strengths of the department and the teachers have very good control of their classes. Teachers combine very good knowledge of the subject with a varied range of teaching strategies which enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. This results in pupils making effective gains in knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons. Teachers build on pupils' previous knowledge and experience and readily check that they understand the tasks and know what they are expected to do to improve their work. Observation, assessment and feedback to pupils are a teaching strength. Where pupils are working on their own compositions or performances teachers give individual coaching so that pupils can work at their own pace. High expectations of what the pupils can achieve are a feature of the very good teaching and promote a demanding pace of learning. Pupils are conscientious in response to teachers' high expectations of their work.
160. Leadership and management of the department are very strong and talented teachers work effectively together as a team, sharing a commitment to the improvement of the subject. This was particularly noticeable in extra-curricular activities and in the sharing of different elements of the GCSE and sixth form lessons. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are in place but these have not yet been up-dated using the new guidance for the National Curriculum 2000. Although self-assessment for the pupils is regularly used, targets for assessment which reflect the elements and the new levels in music have not yet been developed. Lessons and schemes of work are monitored, but there is little analysis of any weaknesses in teaching and learning and this remains an area for development. Accommodation has improved considerably since the last report, although the number of practice rooms remains insufficient for the large numbers of pupils studying the subject. Resources are adequate but there is a shortage of music technology overall, especially of dedicated computers with software linked to appropriate keyboards, for the large numbers studying GCSE and A level. Although pupils study and perform music from a variety of world cultures including gamelan, flamenco, and jazz, the range of instruments from other cultures is narrow. As a whole, music education provides a rich base for the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in the school. Music adds good value to the curriculum.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

161. Standards in physical education are good by the end of Year 11 and many individuals achieve well in games and competitive sports. This represents good progress, from average standards at the end of Year 9. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average; boys and girls achieved equally well. Results have been consistently good over the last five years and compare very favourably with the results achieved by the same pupils in their other subjects in the school. This high standard of achievement was maintained in the examinations taken in July 2000.
162. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, the majority of pupils at the end of Year 9 attain in line with national expectations. A significant minority attain above these expectations, and a few attain below. These standards are in line with the teacher assessments. Pupils arrive at the school with varying levels of skill in swimming, with some pupils not able to achieve the standard expected of 11 year olds (to swim 25 metres). However, by the end of Year 7 pupils have



progressed to the point where only a very few pupils cannot swim at least this distance with confidence. In games activities, many pupils have a good grasp of the basic skills and are able to apply strategies and tactics in a competitive situation. They understand the importance of team-work, and have a good level of fitness in cross-country. They are able to make basic evaluations about their own and others' performance, but their evaluative skills could be more fully developed.

163. The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Year 11 is better than national expectations. Good levels of skills are clearly evident in a wide range of activities. Pupils have a good understanding of tactics and strategies, and are able to apply the skills that have been practised in the full game. In health-related education pupils have satisfactory understanding of fitness issues and practices and are able to maintain activity levels for appropriate periods of time. By this stage, many pupils lead warm-up sessions with confidence, and are able to umpire in an efficient manner. Pupils in the examination group are developing understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject. They have a good understanding of the syllabus requirements and are able to effectively link theoretical and practical concepts. Pupils have been accessing the Internet and using information and communications technology to produce some interesting project work. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, are given much support by both teaching staff and fellow pupils and reach levels of attainment which are commendable for them.
164. Many school teams take part in a large number of inter-school games and sporting events and gain much success, particularly in soccer and net-ball where some of the school teams are the district champions. Many pupils have represented the district and Staffordshire in a variety of activities and some have gone on to gain national honours. In hand-ball, in which the school has a justifiably high international reputation, pupils attain a very high standard of performance.
165. The overall quality of teaching is good; in a significant minority of lessons teaching is very good and it is never less than satisfactory. All lessons begin in an orderly manner; objectives are clearly stated, helping pupils to understand what is expected of them and how to improve. Lessons are well organised and conducted at a brisk, demanding pace, achieving an appropriate balance of activities and offering pupils a range of appropriate challenges. Pupils respond very positively to the high quality of teaching, and involve themselves in lesson activities with enthusiasm and commitment. Teachers expect that pupils will work hard and behave well, and generally these expectations are met: pupils learn well and often progress well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. For example, in a Year 10 hockey lesson, moved inside at short notice because of rain, the teacher's high expectations together with very effective demonstration of hockey skills enabled the pupils to make good use of their time and progress well. Year 11 pupils preparing for GCSE respond very well to the brisk lesson pace and develop good understanding of the organisation of sport nationally.
166. The curriculum offer, which is meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum, allows pupils to take part in a wide range of activities and supports the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Since the last inspection, while changes have been made which allow orienteering to be offered to all pupils, dance has not been introduced as part of the school timetable, although there is a dance club. Students in the sixth form still do not have time-tabled physical education lessons, although some are involved in extra-curricular activities. Assessment within the department takes place at the end of each module. Pupils are little involved in modular assessments, and most are not familiar with the criteria used. It would be helpful if the criteria for assessments at the end of Year 9 were displayed, thereby involving pupils in monitoring their own progress. Many teachers, including non-specialists, give very freely of their time to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are very well supported by large and enthusiastic groups of pupils.
167. Good leadership and a positive ethos characterise the management of the subject. The high quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and supports the delivery of the subject. Departmental displays around the school are good and effectively stimulate pupils' interest in the subject. The staff who teach physical education work well together, support each other and show a very strong commitment to the pupils. The accommodation for the subject is of

very good quality, and is supplemented by the excellent facilities of the Chase Leisure centre which combine to have a very positive effect on the pupils' attainment.

168. Since the last inspection the department has continued to provide its pupils with high quality physical education. Changes have been made to the curriculum offer which enable orienteering to be provided. Following comments in the last report common standards of safety are applied by all members of staff.