

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD'S BLUECOAT  
SCHOOL**

Hereford

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116991

Headteacher: Mr. A. Marson

Reporting inspector: Mr. R. Passant  
2728

Dates of inspection: 4 - 6 December 2000

Inspection number: 223762

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hampton Dene Road

Tupsley

Hereford

Postcode: HR1 1UU

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Reverend Preb. J. Reese

Date of previous inspection: 27.02.1995

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is an 11-16 voluntary aided Church of England mixed comprehensive. It is bigger than average with 1174 pupils on roll. The school achieved specialist status as a technology college in 1997. The school serves Tupsley and neighbouring rural parishes and church-going families within the Archdeaconry of Hereford. The school was heavily over subscribed at the last inspection and this continues to be the case. The majority of staff have a deeply held faith and actively work within the Christian community. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above five per cent, below the national average. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs is broadly average although the percentage of pupils with statements is high because the school has a special needs centre for pupils with complex learning difficulties. The school is also a designated centre for pupils with physical disabilities. Almost all pupils are of UK heritage and the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very low as is the percentage from minority ethnic groups. Attainment on entry for the majority of pupils is good, but there are a significant number of pupils, about 13 per cent, who have below average ability, particularly in English. Until the last two years that figure was higher, particularly in the case of the boys. For example, in 1997 a third of the boys entering the school were below average in English and overall, the boys' ability on entry was broadly average.

In 1999, 87 per cent of pupils went on to further education.

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

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat is a very good school. It has, deservedly, a very high reputation. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. GCSE results are well above average. The quality of teaching is good. The leadership and management across the school are very good. Pupils are the central focus of the school; their achievement is constantly and consistently fostered. It is a caring community that strives to work in partnership with parents and listen to their concerns carefully.

The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The quality of leadership and management of the school and the sense of purpose this brings to pupils' welfare and their advancement are very good.
- There is consistent teaching of good quality. Teachers are very committed to the pupils.
- Pupils achieve very high standards.
- Pupils are generally very well motivated and have very good attitudes to learning.
- It is a school which places high priority on the on-going professional development of all staff and its own continuing improvement.
- There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.

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

- The flexible use of special educational needs support staff across the school and opportunities, where appropriate, for pupils with special educational needs to work alongside their peers.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1995. Since that time the school has made very significant improvement. Pupil performance in GCSE has always been above the national average. Since 1995 results have improved steadily. The school has addressed the issues raised in the previous report relating to management, the curriculum, and monitoring very well. It is now efficient and has developed sophisticated systems of self-evaluation. The tutoring system is now very well defined. The quality of teaching has shown improvement. In 1997 the school succeeded in becoming a specialist technology college. It has also since been awarded 'Investors in People' and the Sportsmark Gold with Distinction. In February 2000 it was awarded a 'Charter Mark' recognising the work it has done in emphasising customer care. The school is also a training school, contributing to the training of teachers. The awards recognise the work going on in the school and its work within local primary schools and other outreach work but also provide additional layers of scrutiny contributing to the school's evaluation of its own performance.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The average points scored by pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2000 is in the top five per cent of schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (more than five and less than nine per cent). Results at GCSE show a steady improvement over time, broadly in line with the national trend. The school sets itself targets for performance at GCSE which are appropriately challenging but based on knowledge of the pupils. It exceeded its target in the 2000 tests. The school has a large number of pupils with special educational needs, many of whom take certificated courses, which for the individual pupils concerned represents considerable personal achievement. In addition, the school operates a successful Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, and the Bishop's Award scheme, which recognises personal achievement in broader terms than simply academic.

National Curriculum tests for pupils who are aged 14 in 2000 indicate that pupils perform well above the national average in English, mathematics and science in the percentage achieving Levels 5 and above.

The school monitors pupil performance carefully by gender and is aware that girls outperform boys at GCSE and particularly, for example, in the percentage of girls achieving the very high levels in English in the 2000 tests at 14. However, given that the boys were broadly average in their ability when they joined the school in 1997, the fact that they achieved well above the national average by the age of 14 indicates that the measures the school is taking in addressing this issue are beginning to work. By the age of 16 the difference in the average point score for boys and girls is very close to the difference found nationally. Particularly able pupils are able to take additional examinations, such as statistics, early. The school is flexible in its approach and is developing units of work within the GCSE structure to meet the needs and abilities of particular groups of pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets. The school runs effective summer schools designed to raise standards in literacy for identified pupils with appropriate follow-up and support. The school also runs a summer school for identified very able pupils. Generally,

all pupils achieve well and make good progress. Progress improves as the pupils work through the school. Form tutors meet with pupils to set targets and progress is monitored on a termly basis.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The majority of pupils have very good attitudes to work. They co-operate well in discussion and listen attentively. They are able to concentrate and stay on task and are willing to learn. They are well motivated, thoughtful and responsive. There are a few pupils who are not stimulated and work in a more desultory fashion or are more passive in their approach.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. Pupils are generally mature. In the cramped conditions around the school there is some pushing and shoving but the behaviour is not malicious. A very large number of pupils eat their packed lunch in the hall in a calm quiet manner and only require very light supervision. Pupils are polite. The school is open about the possibility of bullying. The staff handbook identifies the need for vigilance particularly with the less than easy to spot verbal intimidation. Appropriate measures have been established.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils have a clear understanding of how the school works and to whom they can turn. They accept the high expectations placed on them to be part of the community and to study. The majority manage the demands of taking a large number of subjects, and the personal organisation that entails, well. They have particularly mature attitudes towards disability and gender issues.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. It is well above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was excellent in six per cent, very good in 17 per cent, good in 48 per cent and satisfactory in 29 per cent. No teaching seen was less than satisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching is good across the school. It is the fact that the teaching is consistently of good quality that ensures that all pupils make good progress. Mathematics, English and science are taught well, as are other subjects. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge, which motivates and engages pupils' interest and ensures that they work at a good rate. Relationships are good and classrooms managed well. Schemes of work are detailed and planning is of good quality and takes into account the range of ability in the class. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Expectations are generally high, although in some lessons there could have been greater challenge in the work. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own learning. Some examples of very good marking were seen which gave the pupil a clear understanding how to improve the work. However,



the quality of the marking was variable and in a few cases not up to date. Very good examples of homework were seen which effectively extended the learning in lessons. Homework is set regularly.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum is very good. All pupils study a balanced curriculum throughout the school. The school is not fully meeting the requirements for the act of collective worship. There is an excellent, very rich programme of extra-curricular activities. The use of computers across the curriculum is an identified area for further development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The current interim management arrangements provide the school with an opportunity to review the spectrum of provision for special educational needs across the school in order to develop inclusion, as appropriate, and to use support staffing flexibly. Overall, there is a good provision.
Provision for pupils' personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, the provision for this aspect is good. The provision for moral development is very good. There are good opportunities within the curriculum to discuss moral issues, such as racism within the work on slavery in history, for example, or the moral implications of environmental issues in geography. Provision for social development is very good. The extra-curricular opportunities, residential trips and opportunities to take responsibility within the school community make a significant contribution. Cultural development within the curriculum is good. The provision for spiritual development is sound. Pupils' sense of self-esteem is fostered consistently. Very detailed planning in the schemes of work for music highlights cross-curricular links; for example, aspects of citizenship within an ethnically diverse society. However, similar detailed planning on this aspect was not general.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. The school operates a house system and, within that structure, pupils are known well. The role of the form tutor is clear and the tutoring system well defined. Pupils feel supported, cared for and that there is someone they could turn to if needed. They report that the peer support group 'The Listening Link' is effective and provides an alternative confidential counselling service. Individual parents at the meeting were appreciative of the help and support given to pupils who had been ill over a period. All teachers are aware of their responsibility with regard to child protection issues. Teachers and support staff show by their dedication and commitment that pupils, their care, well-being and achievement, are the focus of the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is very good. There is very good leadership and management across the school. The school has a clear direction for further improvement based on very effective on-going self-evaluation. Appraisal, review and target setting are used very well to enhance the school's performance. There is a very strong sense of corporate commitment to the pupils' care and achievement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. Through the formalised review processes and attachment to departments, members of the governing body have a very good insight into the school. They play a significant role in setting the strategic direction for the school. They bring a range of expertise, debate is open and they are prepared to challenge. They set targets for the headteacher and evaluate the progress of the school improvement plan.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation is very good. There is an established formal review process, which examines the work of each department in turn or at the request of the department if there is an issue over which they want advice and support. Departmental action planning based on departmental review is very good. Very good use is made of comparative assessment information at whole school and departmental level. The recognition of the work of the school by a number of national bodies brings with it additional external scrutiny. The school has an established complaints procedure and uses this well. The school seeks the views of parents over issues through the parents' committee.
The strategic use of resources	Resources and funding for resources are used very effectively.

The school is well aware of the accommodation and redecoration needs. The physical education changing facilities are targeted for improvement. The school applies the principles of best value very carefully to any major expenditure.

## 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>• Their child likes school.</li> <li>• Their child is making good progress in school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The fact that the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school is helping their child become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li> <li>• Keeping parents more fully informed about how their child is getting on.</li> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• Locker provision.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully support the very positive views that parents have of the school. In the view of the team, the school seeks to work closely with parents and pupils spoken to confirmed that members of staff would contact parents quickly if there was a problem. Parents clearly felt that the school was

approachable. Appropriate homework is set regularly. Pupils interviewed felt that parents did not always understand the nature of the work, particularly with regard to course-work that had been set. The school provides lockers for students but the site is large and it is impossible to site them in a centrally convenient location.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The quality of leadership and management of the school and the sense of purpose this brings to pupils' welfare and their advancement is very good.**

1. The school has a clear sense of direction and a sense of purpose, which is shared by staff. One gains the very strong impression of a corporate commitment by all adults working at the school to supporting pupils and their achievement. It is a commitment which is more often seen in primary schools where the numbers of adults involved is less and, as a consequence, whilst developing a corporate ethos is no less demanding, it is somewhat easier logistically. It is a professionally demanding institution. It sets high expectations for the pupils to achieve well and this, in turn, sets high expectations for staff. It is a school which makes considerable professional demands on those who work there, to ensure that high standards are maintained and developed and pupils are supported effectively.
2. Clearly, this sense of corporate commitment and the accountability that is fostered in true teamwork stems from the very good leadership and management of the headteacher. Characteristics of the leadership across the school, such as the calm, authoritative, caring and supportive tone, the high quality relationships, the high expectations and the demand for high standards, yet sensitivity to the need for support when necessary, clearly owe their origins to the modelling by the headteacher. He has successfully developed a committed team of staff who share the aims of the school and present a consistency in the way that matters are dealt with across the school. Delegation is effective. The roles of the senior management team have been recently re-organised and were subject to further adjustment because of staffing changes; nevertheless, they work effectively as a team and have a clear perception of their roles.
3. The school has clear aims, which are consistently pursued. The style is open and consultative but with a sharp and sustained focus on pupil achievement. Very good use is made of comparative information and formal review as part of the school's self-evaluation procedures, along with appraisal and target setting. The school's involvement with nationally recognised bodies, such as 'Investors in People' and 'Charter Mark', provides further scrutiny as well as recognition of what the school is doing well.
4. Through the process of termly formal review of a particular department, senior management and members of the governing body have a particularly good understanding of the strengths of the school and those aspects requiring development. The governing body brings a range of professional and personal expertise and very effectively carries out its role of governance, effectively providing support and appropriate critical challenge to the work of the school.
5. The very good leadership and management by the senior management are replicated across the school. Heads of departments effectively monitor and review the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books. Aspects of development are identified and effectively translated into action plans. These, in turn, are incorporated into the school improvement plan. There are formal meetings with the headteacher to review development plans and examination results. Members of staff are professionally open to new ideas and share skills.

**There is consistent teaching of good quality. Teachers are very committed to the pupils.**

6. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was excellent in six per cent, very good in 17 per cent, good in 48 per cent and satisfactory in 29 per cent. No teaching seen was less than satisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching is good across the school.
7. Teachers' planning is very effective. Schemes of work are detailed and provide very effective support. Lessons are, therefore, well planned and interesting and use a range of teaching approaches to engage pupils' interest and to motivate them. For example, a good Year 7 science

lesson, examining friction and balanced forces, used teacher exposition with effective force diagrams and a brief extract from a film to illustrate the key points; and pupil discussion and a short question paper to test pupils' basic knowledge and understanding. Learning objectives are precise and usually shared with the class, so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are going to do and why. In a good English lesson, well-organised group work, each with a different task, effectively looked at an extract from 'Boy' in order to write about children's rights. Instructions were crisp and there were clear expectations. The pace and challenge was maintained with positive feedback from the teacher to the group's response, so that differing views were effectively expressed.

8. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are therefore able to question pupils effectively to review what they understand about a particular subject and then to deepen their understanding. In a good geography lesson, the teacher effectively challenged pupils' ideas and opinions as they prepared a role play on Hinkley Point and the advantages and disadvantages of different sources of power. The confidence in the material is also demonstrated by the clear exposition and directions seen in the majority of lessons observed and in the genuine enthusiasm and energy used to present the material. In a very small number of lessons the teacher's talk tended to dominate. Pupils are managed well, often sensitively. In an English lesson with low attaining pupils, the teacher's priority was clearly to build pupils' confidence and maintain their enthusiasm for the task. Through the teacher's supportive approach the group were evidently riveted by the novel they were reading, 'Of Mice and Men', and, through gentle guidance, were making sensitive and thoughtful responses, clearly understanding the parallels between George's shooting of his dog and Lenny.
9. Teachers' expectations are usually high, although in a few lessons, which were overall satisfactory, pupils could have been challenged to a greater extent. Pupils develop a good understanding of their own learning through the shared learning objectives; and the discussions with the whole class towards the end of the lessons -which usually took place- to review what had been learnt in the session, relating directly back to the learning objectives. Teachers also often share the assessment criteria for a particular exercise, so that pupils understand what they have to do in order to achieve good marks. Whilst this was a particularly common feature in the GCSE course-work, it was also a common element in the work at Key Stage 3. There were examples of very good marking, which clearly identified what the pupil had to do to improve and gave clear indications of the pupils' attainment. However, although the quality of marking was overall good, there was some variability and the very good features which seemed to be adopted by some teachers or departments were not necessarily consistently applied. In a very few cases the work appeared to be unmarked. Very good examples of homework were seen which effectively extended the learning in lessons. Homework is set regularly. Pupils reported that the homework timetable is normally followed but problems can arise when occasionally teachers set work at different times. They also suggested that sometimes parents did not fully appreciate or understand the nature of the homework, particularly when it related to course-work and this might be a reason why some parents expressed some concerns about the amount of the work in the parents' questionnaire.
10. There are two very strong features, which relate to the overall quality of the teaching. The first is that pupils make generally good progress, including those with special educational needs, because of the overall consistency of good quality teaching. Teachers are well prepared, know their subject, plan in detail, present the work with interest and demand high standards and develop very positive relationships with the pupils. As a result, pupils are secure, generally confident to express a point of view and work at a good rate. The second very strong feature is that teachers are very committed to the pupils. They give every impression of enjoying working with them and clearly want them to succeed. Pupils are sensitive and responsive to this. They are confident that teachers will listen to them but also understand that teachers 'press you to get your best performance.' It is this underlying commitment by staff, this 'press for achievement', which involves not only their professional skills but an appropriately emotional commitment and involvement in the pupils' success which permeates the work of the school.

## **Pupils achieve very high standards.**

11. National Curriculum tests for pupils who are aged 14 in 2000 indicate that pupils perform well above the national average in English, mathematics and science in the percentage achieving Level 5 and above, and in the average point score achieved by pupils. When the results are compared to similar schools, (that is schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals- above five per cent and below nine per cent), then results in English and science are well above average in the percentage achieving Level 5 and above and above average in mathematics. At Level 6 and above English results are very high, in the top five per cent of similar schools, well above average in mathematics and above average in science.
12. In the tests at 14 for other subjects the results are above the national average in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in history, geography, design and technology, information and communication technology and art and design. In modern foreign languages, the percentage achieving above the national average at Level 4 and above (the expected level for modern foreign languages) is also above the national average. In music and physical education, standards were below the national average. In the view of the inspection team, this does not reflect below average standards in these subjects but is accounted for by the move from descriptive statements to the adoption of levels in these two subjects for the first time.
13. The school monitors pupil performance carefully by gender and is aware that girls outperform boys at GCSE and particularly, for example, in the percentage of girls achieving the very high levels in English in the 2000 tests at 14. However, given that the boys were broadly average in their ability when they joined the school in 1997, and that a third of the boys had below average attainment in the English tests at 11, the fact that they achieved well above the national average by the age of 14 indicates that the intervention measures the school is taking in addressing this issue are working. These measures include running a summer school to raise standards of literacy. Nevertheless, in English language and literature, a higher percentage of girls than boys achieve the A\* to B grades with the boys doing correspondingly better at grade C. Continuing to address this aspect of achievement is identified in the school improvement plan. By the age of 16, the differences in the overall average point score for boys and girls in the GCSE examinations is very close to the differences found nationally.
14. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades in the A\* to C range and A\* to G range is well above average. The percentage gaining one or more grades A\* to G is above average. Over the past four years the average GCSE points score has been consistently well above average. The average points scored by pupils in the GCSE examinations in 2000 is in the top five per cent of schools when compared to schools which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and those schools achieving similar scores at the age of 14. Results at GCSE show a steady improvement over time, broadly in line with the national trend. The percentage of pupils gaining grades in the A\* to C range was above the national average in all subjects. It was significantly above in all subjects except Spanish and information and communication technology.
15. When the 2000 GCSE performance is compared to the results pupils achieved in other subjects within the school, pupils achieved relatively less well in art and design, information and communication technology, mathematics and Spanish. This relative performance tends to change year on year and the only subject showing a significant difference in 1999 and 2000 is art and design where, because of the school policy that all pupils should take an arts/physical education subject, the numbers taking the subject is significantly larger than seen nationally and hence the results may reflect the resultant relative commitment to the subject by the pupils.
16. Particularly able pupils are able to take additional examinations, such as statistics, early. The school also ran a summer school for identified very able pupils. The school is flexible in its approach and is developing units of work within the GCSE structure to meet the needs and abilities of particular groups of pupils. The school has a large number of pupils with special educational needs, many of whom take certificated courses, which for the individual pupils concerned represents considerable personal achievement. A school target is to ensure that all pupils leave with at least some form of certificate. A particularly good example of the inclusion of

pupils with special educational needs is found in physical education where a certificated course and GCSE operate in parallel, allowing individual pupils to take one or other course.

17. The school sets itself targets for performance at GCSE, which are appropriately demanding but based on knowledge of the pupils. It exceeded its target in the 2000 tests. The school operates a successful Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and the Bishop's Award scheme, which recognises personal achievement in broader terms than simply academic, recognising, for example, their contribution to the school community or ability to organise an extended expedition.
18. Generally, all pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their targets. Progress improves as the pupils work through the school. The school has instituted a system of target setting with pupils by providing opportunities for form tutors to meet with pupils on an individual basis. Whilst the school acknowledges that further development of the system is required, particularly in the integration of specific departmental targets to the overall target setting analysis, the overall monitoring of academic progress is very good.

**Pupils are generally very well motivated and have very good attitudes to learning.**

19. The majority of pupils develop very good attitudes to learning. They come to lessons prepared to settle to work. They understand the tasks set and generally they display a mature attitude to their own learning. In a personal and social education lesson, pupils spoken to understood the purpose of the self-assessment pack and why they were carrying out the tasks; as one pupil said, 'to identify your strengths and weaknesses.' In the same lesson, a number of pupils were able to translate their targets into realistic action plans. Whilst some of the targets were too general, for example, 'work harder', they clearly understood the purpose and worked hard at developing an understanding of what they needed to do. The majority of pupils demonstrate their maturity in the way they organise themselves over the demands of taking a large number of GCSEs and participation in the range of extra-curricular activities. Older pupils spoken to did discuss the pressures of taking a large number of examination courses.
20. The majority of pupils are confident and articulate and prepared to contribute to class and group discussions. In a lesson examining the issues relating to 'homelessness', pupils worked well in pairs and threes, sensibly discussing the basic causes and many were eager to join in the whole class discussion which followed, listening and referring to the points made by others and expressing their ideas in a lively way.
21. Generally, in the lessons seen, boys and girls display similar, very positive, attitudes to the lesson. In a lesson, however, looking at letters of application the girls were particularly engaged by the task and uniformly more organised than the boys. They understood what made a good candidate and were better able than the boys to 'read between the lines', picking out the positives and the negatives, both stated and implied. The boys were accurate about searching out relevant facts but generally were far slower at making inferences. In discussion, the boys were somewhat more monosyllabic and generally contributed less, allowing a few girls to dominate the discussion. Pupils have, through their work on literature, personal and social education and the largely inclusive nature of the school, mature attitudes towards issues relating to gender and disability.
22. Teachers generally create a very positive work ethic in classrooms and pupils respond with good levels of concentration. For example, in a physical education lesson the teacher had created a positive co-operative atmosphere so that the pupils wanted to participate and take their turn on the trampoline. In another lesson, boys showed a very good work rate as they developed their basket-ball lay-up skills. In a mathematics lesson, the brisk pace and skill of the teacher in helping pupils recognise number patterns ensured that pupils participated in the mental mathematics with enthusiasm and enjoyment, with pupils encouraging each other with rounds of

applause. In a modern foreign language lesson, music was played to maintain a calm, purposeful atmosphere which had been established by the teacher.

23. In a small minority of lessons, pupils' attitudes were less positive. Pupils in a lower attaining English set were hesitant about putting their ideas forward or discussing the issues and in a chemistry lesson, the pupils appeared flat and lifeless, despite a well-planned and organised lesson. In a modern foreign languages lesson, the presence of a visitor in the room had a dampening effect and the pupils took time to get into the lesson.
24. Overall, however, teachers are very successful at developing pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. The culture of the school, and the 'press for achievement' identified within the teaching section, is a powerful influence to which the majority of pupils respond.

**It is a school which places high priority on the on-going professional development of all staff and its own continuing improvement.**

25. The school is committed to on-going training and development of all staff, teaching, and non-teaching, and governors. There is a staff development committee and individual professional development portfolios were introduced in September 2000. Approximately one per cent of the budget, slightly above the national average, was spent on staff development in the period 1999/2000, reflecting the school's commitment. The school was successfully re-assessed for Investors in People, a national award, in March 2000.
26. This commitment to staff development has led the school to being a member of the 'Marches' consortium and it is involved in initial teacher training, with members of staff acting as tutors and mentors.
27. As a consequence of these initiatives, there is, within the school, on-going professional debate and a focus on the quality of learning and teaching. Teachers are open to new ideas and the school, as an institution, has a natural focus on self-improvement and development which is reflected in the informal professional climate of the school, where skills are shared, as well as the more formal professional development opportunities. This professional climate also infuses the school's own monitoring of its own performance which is rigorous.

**There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.**

28. The school believes in providing multiple opportunities for pupils to achieve success and hence its belief in providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. In addition, the school aims speak of 'providing wider educational experiences' for all pupils and this it does through the excellent provision of extra-curricular activities. It aims to involve at least 75 per cent of the pupils in the extra-curricular opportunities and to ensure that all pupils have a residential experience. Through these additional opportunities provided in the arts, sports, clubs, societies and residential experiences, pupils achieve success and develop their confidence and sense of self-esteem in aspects of school life other than the academic. The breadth of experience and the opportunities for teamwork and working alongside others in an informal setting provided by such experiences provide significant additional opportunities for the social, personal and spiritual growth identified within the school's aims.
29. An underlying theme within this report is the commitment of staff to the broad educational experience of pupils. Members of staff give a great deal of their time to the pupils, be it on the rock face, the trip to France or the Sunday revision class. Parents, from their response in the questionnaire, and pupils, in discussion, value this voluntary commitment.



## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

30. The flexible use of special educational needs support staff across the school, and opportunities, where appropriate, for pupils with special educational needs to work alongside their peers.
31. The school, in line with local education authority policy, has a special education centre housed in the main school. The centre has four specialist teachers and a significant number of learning support assistants, all but three of whom are attached to individual pupils through the provision of a statement. The school is also the only 11-16 school in Herefordshire which is equipped to provide full access to pupils with physical disabilities. The school is, therefore, to quote from the school's special educational needs policy, 'in a quite different and privileged position from most other schools with regard to the provision for special educational needs.'
32. Special needs is seen as a continuum in the school. The school, in partnership with parents and the local education authority, sees itself as 'charged with the responsibility of meeting the needs of all pupils as effectively as possible wherever they are on that continuum.'
33. The aim, according to the policy, is 'to develop the quality of inclusion within our school (whilst protecting and enhancing the specialist provision for those who require it) in such a way that the personal development of all pupils will be enhanced and the whole community enriched.'
34. Currently there are interim management arrangements for the special educational needs provision in the school. This provides the school with an opportunity to review the school's special educational needs provision. There are 264 pupils on the special educational needs register, of whom 67 have specific statements. The last review in 1998 focused on the Special Education centre rather than the spectrum of special educational needs across the school. That review identified the pressure on the head of department in fulfilling a broader role as the school's special educational needs co-ordinator and acting as head of department for the special education centre. Underlying that review was a theme of developing flexibility, developing the continuum identified in the policy. In reality, people talk about the 'centre' and 'mainstream' and the term 'special needs' tends to be used to identify pupils in the centre rather than referring to the spectrum of need. The distinction and constant reinforcement of the distinction works against the concept of inclusion as defined by the school's policy statement.
35. There are unresolved issues, identified by the school, which need to be considered. For example, the role of the heads of subject departments in curriculum planning in the special education centre, particularly if inclusion is to be developed. Similarly, how the expertise within the special education centre is used for the greatest benefit. There are complex resourcing issues, again identified in the internal review. There is the need for a more flexible use of learning support assistants across the school. In a very good physical education lesson, which included pupils who spent considerable time in the centre and GCSE pupils, the staffing was very generous. Admission numbers fluctuate year-on-year for pupils at the centre and flexible staff arrangements are therefore important. There has been some relaxation in funding arrangements, which permits a more flexible response and use of staff. The internal review argued for more integration and exchange, but it noted the difficulties, for example, of matching the timetable and indeed pupils currently in the centre having more complex needs.
36. The inspection team supports the special education centre action plan, which suggests the need for greater clarification of the function of the special education centre within the local education authority's special educational needs provision. Local education authority involvement in the review would be helpful.

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

37. In addition to the developments identified in the school improvement plan and to build on the school's very significant strengths, the headteacher, governors and members of staff should:
38. undertake a comprehensive review of the school's special educational needs provision with particular regard to:
  - the overall management;
  - developing the concept of a continuum of special educational needs in the school in order to develop;
  - inclusion as appropriate;
  - flexibility of staffing to support special educational needs across the school;
  - sharing of expertise.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	17	48	29	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1174	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	66	

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	67	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	264	

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.4

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	125	105	230

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	100	99	98
	Girls	90	84	81
	Total	190	183	179
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (81)	80 (79)	78 (74)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	54 (40)	55 (61)	41 (44)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	105	99	92
	Girls	94	90	80
	Total	199	189	172
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	87 (87)	83 (80)	75 (84)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	46 (60)	55 (63)	44 (48)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	114	116	230

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	68	110	111
	Girls	88	112	114
	Total	156	222	225
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	68 (70)	97 (96)	98 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	52 (52.9)

per pupil	National	38.4 (38)
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1166
Any other minority ethnic group	4

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	16	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	66.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	33
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80.7

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.8
Key Stage 4	21.1

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,839,674
Total expenditure	2,817,437
Expenditure per pupil	2,407
Balance brought forward from previous year	-5,677
Balance carried forward to next year	16,560

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1175
Number of questionnaires returned	449

### Percentage of responses in each category

*The results may not add up to 100 due to rounding.*

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	48	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	49	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	58	8	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	59	15	3	2
The teaching is good.	33	63	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	55	15	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	37	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	34	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	33	51	10	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	52	41	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	50	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	31	2	0	2

## **SUMMARY OF PARENTS' AND CARERS' RESPONSES**

Parents were very supportive of the school at the parents' meeting. They felt that the quality of information they received was good and that the school was approachable and listened to any complaints. There was concern about the amount that pupils had to carry around with them. Older pupils acknowledged there was a problem with lockers because they were spread out and it was difficult to get to them. Younger pupils said that lockers required a lot of maintenance but the provision had improved.

There were 449 responses to the parents' questionnaire and a large number of parents had taken the trouble to write additional comments. It is not possible within the framework of the inspection to respond to individual concerns. One family exercised their right to meet with a member of the inspection team to discuss the fact they had removed their child from the school because of alleged bullying.

The inspection team fully support the very positive views that parents have of the school. In the view of the team, the school seeks to work closely with parents and pupils spoken to confirm that members of staff would contact parents quickly if there was a problem. Parents clearly felt that the school was approachable. Some very good examples of homework were seen and appropriate work is set regularly. Pupils interviewed felt that parents did not always understand the nature of the work, particularly with regard to course-work that had been set.