

INSPECTION REPORT

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

BUXTON

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112971

Headteacher: Mr J A McCabe

Reporting inspector: Dr A R Beaver
20224

Dates of inspection: 30-31 October 2000

Inspection number: 223784

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:	Palace Fields Buxton Derbyshire
Postcode:	SK17 6AF
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr D Higgins
Date of previous inspection:	6-9 February 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas More is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided comprehensive school in the Diocese of Nottingham. It provides education for 369 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. It is much smaller than most other secondary schools. Pupils come mainly from two Roman Catholic primary schools in Buxton and New Mills. Others come from non-denominational schools in Buxton and neighbouring small towns in the wide surrounding rural area. About one in five pupils who are admitted to the school are not from Roman Catholic families, but all have Christian backgrounds. The percentage of pupils identified by the school to have special educational needs is average. The proportion with statements defining their special needs, so as to provide extra resources, is well above the national average. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language and are of European origin. The number of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school is popular and the number of pupils has increased by a quarter since its previous inspection in 1995. Pupils' attainment when they enter the school at age 11 spans the full range of ability and, overall, has usually been close to the nationally expected level for 11 year olds, but with an above average proportion having learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Thomas More is a good school. The headteacher, staff and governors are very successful in developing the spiritual and moral maturity of pupils. Pupils of wide-ranging abilities progress very well, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and attain very good standards at GCSE, well above those achieved nationally. Teaching is good, and much is very good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management support teachers and pupils to achieve their best standards.
- Teaching is good and enables pupils of wide ranging abilities and talents to learn very successfully, make very good progress and attain high standards. The quality of teaching and work in expressive arts subjects is very good.
- The school provides pupils with a strong sense of the importance of spiritual, and consequent moral and social, values through very good relationships, giving pupils positive attitudes to school and ensuring their very good behaviour.
- The school takes great care of pupils, ensuring their welfare and supporting them to achieve their best standards.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and enables them to achieve their best standards.
- The school has an excellent relationship with parents, who are very interested and supportive.

What could be improved

- More use of information and communication technology in all subjects; provision of the statutory requirement for the subject for all Year 10 pupils; more modern computers.
- The curriculum in Year 10. A statement of current aims and policy for the curriculum against which changed provision should be evaluated.
- Accommodation, especially for sport.

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 much improved since its last inspection in February 1995 under very good leadership. It has gained in popularity, considerably increasing the number of pupils on roll. Pupils have made good progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and standards of attainment at GCSE have usually been well above the national average. Results are usually above those of schools of similar type. Good progress has been made to resolve the key issues of the previous inspection. Monitoring, mutual observation and

effective deployment of specialists have ensured that teaching and learning are of good quality. Pupils' behaviour is now very good throughout the school. Provision for expressive arts subjects enables pupils to learn successfully from very good teaching and attain very good standards. The need for full use of all classrooms has not yet enabled the release of the library as a place only for research and study, but new planned accommodation should make this possible. Accommodation for science has been improved and further improvements, soon to be implemented, should ensure that most needs are met. However, additional indoor accommodation for sport is a continuing need. Overall, the school has improved considerably since 1995. It is achieving well and has good capacity to improve even further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar+ schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B

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

+Reference to similar schools is to those schools which contain a similar proportion of pupils who claim eligibility for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools with pupils of similar backgrounds; the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is not part of the comparison because local authorities differ considerably in this provision and fair comparison is not possible. Reference to all schools indicates all secondary schools across the country.

Pupils enter the school at age 11, attaining standards close to the national average overall. They make good progress during Years 7, 8 and 9. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, they attain standards which are above the average of all schools in all three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science. In recent years, the upward trend in results has been in line with the national rate of improvement. Although pupils' attainment in the tests was below the average of similar schools in 1999, it was significantly higher in 2000.

During Years 10 and 11, pupils make very good progress and usually attain GCSE results which are well above average. In 2000, a year group of lower potential attained a slightly lower GCSE average point score than in 1999. However, the percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades remained equal to that of 1999. All pupils attain at least five GCSE A* to G grades. Since 1995, the upward trend in GCSE results has been above the rising national trend. The school sets demanding targets for its GCSE results, and exceeds these. Pupils make the most of their abilities and achieve very well in GCSE examinations.

In work seen, pupils attain above average standards. In English, they write competently in a range of styles and their writing is technically correct. Pupils are well skilled in using mental mathematics and present well organised written work, reducing the chance of error. In science, pupils' practical and investigative work is very good and they are confident to use practical skills competently and independently. Pupils of all levels of ability achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils have positive attitudes and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of	Very good. Pupils behave well in class and around the school.

classrooms	
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good, ensuring that pupils have purposeful attitudes to learning, behave well and achieve their best.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average, and unauthorised absence well below.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. It was very good in 34 per cent. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good throughout the school. Literacy and numeracy are taught well. The needs of pupils of wide ranging abilities are well met. For example, pupils withdrawn for special teaching of reading learn very well and make very good progress. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects, and is very good in art, drama and music. In all subjects, teachers manage pupils very well, expect them to work hard and make the most of their talents. Pupils learn new knowledge and practical skills well, prompted and inspired by teachers who enable them to understand how to improve their standards by helpful marking of work and individual advice.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good range of subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9. Some unnecessary duplication of Year 6 work in Year 7. Some unsatisfactory features in Year 10, where pupils have plenty of subject choice, but the reasons for making some subject choices are unclear. Some Year 10 pupils do not receive their full statutory entitlement to information and communication technology. Extra-curricular opportunities are constrained by restricted indoor accommodation for sport on-site but other provision, especially for the expressive arts and for pupils' social development, is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are very well supported in class. Their needs are clearly identified and very effectively met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Pupils' spiritual development is very well provided for. Provision for their moral and social development is very good, and much influenced by the spiritual values taught by the school. Provision for cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. Teachers and other staff understand pupils' needs very well, and provide help and support for them to make the most of their talents.

The school has a very strong partnership with parents, who are overwhelmingly confident to talk to staff about any problems concerning their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Headteacher and key staff ensure that pupils achieve what they are capable of on the courses they follow. Much success is achieved in the school's central purpose of developing pupils' spiritual and moral maturity.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very interested and committed to the well-being of the school. They have good professional expertise which they use freely in the school's interest. They have reorganised their committees to help them to specialise and make informed decisions. They seek the views of pupils, staff and parents on the quality of education provided to inform the decisions they take.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school monitors its achievements closely, and analyses the data available to improve practice. The resulting priorities for improvement become objectives of the school development plan.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Funding is used efficiently, and the school has avoided a deficit despite financial constraints. Use of resources is well linked to the priorities of the school development plan.

Plans have been approved to improve accommodation because this currently constrains learning opportunities. There is no approval yet to improve the unsatisfactory provision of much-needed indoor accommodation for sport. There are insufficient computers available for pupils to use in all subjects. The school applies the principles of best value effectively. The school's academic results compare well nationally, and it sets challenging targets to raise standards further. It consults its pupils, parents and staff closely, and ensures that competition is used effectively to get good value for the services that it purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are confident to approach the school with difficulties concerning their children. • The school is well led and managed. • Their children are expected to work hard to do their best, and helped to become mature and responsible. • Their children like attending the school. • Teaching is good. • Pupils' behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities available. • Homework. • More information on how their children are getting on.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The range of extra-curricular activities available is constrained by insufficient indoor accommodation for sport. Otherwise provision is what could reasonably be expected in a small school, and provision for the expressive arts is good. Homework is set regularly and supports pupils' independent learning well. Parents receive constructive written information about their children's progress. However, consultative evenings for parents to discuss progress with teachers should be better organised to give sufficient time and privacy.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Leadership and management support teachers and pupils to achieve their best standards.

1. Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is very good, quietly effective, good humoured and purposeful. They give positive direction to the work of the school, helping to realise its essential purpose of extending the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Senior staff are very well known in this small school and lead by example in the effort, care and commitment which they freely give to all. The concern and support that they provide for colleagues and pupils are reflected in the rapport, warmth, friendliness and professionalism which flow across the school community, and the very good relationships which are universally apparent. The leadership team has raised the expectations of teachers, other staff, pupils and parents, encouraging all to aim for their highest personal and intellectual standards.

2. The headteacher and senior staff enable teachers and pupils to achieve and sustain high standards of work. They help teachers to develop their skills so that pupils learn successfully from more effective teaching. They have helped teachers to improve the quality of their work by a system of partnerships in which teachers within their own subject and in co-operation with those teaching different subjects have gained from mutual observation, evaluation and wider staff discussion of the impact of teaching methods on pupils' learning. A specific objective of school development planning has been to develop teaching and learning methods, with attention especially given to raising the attainment of boys. In 2000, for the first time, a higher percentage of boys attained five or more GCSE A* to C grades than girls. Teachers and pupils have been supported and encouraged to think that higher standards are possible and, as a result, they have gained confidence to aim and achieve highly. Pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school are, overall, close to average but by GCSE, their impressive rate of progress, particularly in Years 10 and 11, enables them to attain standards which are well above the national average. In 2000, the demanding target set for attainment at GCSE was exceeded. Very good leadership gives parents and the community confidence in what children can achieve at school, whatever their individual abilities, difficulties or talents may be. As a result, the school roll has increased by a quarter since the previous inspection in 1995.

3. Headteacher and governors deploy funding available to the school effectively to support pupils' successful learning. School development planning identifies key priorities successfully and applies the principles of best value to achieve these. The school compares well with others in the achievements of pupils. Standards of work and behaviour are challenging and maintained at a high level. Good value for money is achieved in the services which the school secures. Consultation with pupils, parents and staff is very good. For example, governors commission an exit poll of leavers from Year 11 to inform decisions on the quality of education provided by the school.

Teaching is good and enables pupils of wide ranging abilities and talents to learn very successfully, make very good progress and attain high standards. The quality of teaching and work in expressive arts subjects is very good.

4. Teaching is good overall. None is unsatisfactory. One lesson in three is very good. Teaching is effective, above all, because relationships between pupils and teachers are very good, and give pupils the confidence to achieve their best. Teachers know individual pupils very well. For example, very good relationships in a Year 11 geography lesson on employment gave pupils confidence to discuss and seek explanations from the teacher whose response was helpful and encouraging. No pupil felt inhibited or embarrassed in seeking help and all made very good progress. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers enable teachers to manage pupils very well, ensuring their attitudes to learning and behaviour are positive. Teachers' very good class management ensures that pupils concentrate on their work and make progress whatever their levels of attainment. In a Year 7 lesson in information and communication technology, for example, the teacher's management of the class was good, ensuring that pupils followed basic, but essential, instructions on how to use computers.

5. Most lessons are challenging for pupils, enabling them to make good progress. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to adapt work well to the needs of all pupils. For example, in a Year 11 poetry lesson, the teacher used secure knowledge of the meaning and structure of a poem to question and extend pupils' understanding very well. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson on number patterns, the teacher provided groups of pupils of different attainment with work which was suitably challenging for them. Some worked on exercises from the textbook, and others were helped to take number sequences to higher levels. The work was well adapted for pupils of differing attainment in the subject.

6. Teachers use a good range of methods to help pupils to understand and develop their own subject knowledge and skills. The teacher's clear demonstration of skills in a Year 9 lesson on basketball helped pupils to practise these skills effectively for themselves and apply them progressively, enabling them to make good progress. Thoughtful, well directed questions, clear explanations and expositions are used well and provoke good response from pupils in most lessons, taking forward their knowledge and understanding. Teachers give considerable thought to how best to enable all pupils to learn successfully. For example, they use seating arrangements in classrooms for girls and boys and the composition of small groups of pupils of similar or different attainment effectively.

7. Teachers plan their lessons well and pupils follow a well-organised sequence of learning activities. They usually share with pupils what the lesson's aim is so that they understand the direction and purpose of what they are to do. Effective planning enables teachers to run their lessons at a good pace and to use well-chosen resources. For example, the teacher of an English lesson on different genres in writing initially explained the objectives of the lesson clearly, and then used the stimulus of the contents of a spy's bag to provoke discussion to help pupils to appreciate the purpose of different styles of writing.

8. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is thorough and detailed and helps individual pupils to make good progress. Pupils get a clear indication of the level at which they are working. Marking of written work usually provides helpful written advice, in addition to the oral comments which pupils often receive, on how to improve their standard. Teachers are demanding of accuracy in writing and expect a good level of presentation of written work.

9. Homework is regularly set and it usually helps to extend learning well. Homework in English is often very challenging. For example, a Year 11 English class received a

demanding homework, based on their discussion in class of different perspectives arising from study of the characters in their GCSE text. This was very helpful to their further understanding of characterisation - and to their preparation for the examination.

10. The quality of teaching in the expressive arts is very good and ensures that pupils achieve high standards. For example, in a very good Year 9 music lesson, the teacher's effective planning enabled pupils to link prior work on major and minor chords with new learning of the seventh chord, very successfully. Work was adapted well for pupils' very varied range of attainment enabling all to achieve their best standard. Teachers demonstrate techniques very well in art and pupils are enthralled to observe the rapid and effective development of images before their eyes. This stimulates their imagination and rate of learning, by enabling them to understand how they can use their own skills most effectively. Their own work reflects the interest and imagination stimulated by teachers' skills. For example, Year 7 pupils were helped to build up a successful composition from thumbnail sketches of leaves and other natural autumn forms after seeing at first hand how the teacher could get effective results after a short demonstration. Similarly, a Year 9 class was informed by the teacher's demonstration how to develop compositions in the style of Arcimboldo and H R Giger, with the result that pupils' own practice was better informed and their quality of work improved. A first drama lesson for a Year 7 class was a very positive experience in which the teacher established necessary rules, and enabled pupils to use their imaginations and practise new skills, enabling them to make very good progress in their learning.

11. An outcome of good teaching and effective learning is that pupils achieve their best standards of work. Overall, pupils enter the school with standards of attainment close to the national average. Some year groups are a little below average, overall, although all contain pupils whose attainment spans the full range of ability. Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 9 attain standards which are usually above average in the national tests in the three subjects tested, English, mathematics and science.

12. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' progress accelerates, and they attain standards at GCSE which are well above the national average, and usually above the average of schools of similar type. The proportion of GCSE A* and A grades which pupils attain often considerably exceeds that of all schools. Higher attaining pupils achieve impressive academic standards and often continue their education in sixth form college and university. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C is regularly well above the national average. All pupils usually attain five or more GCSE grades A* to G. This is a significant result because some pupils in each year group have considerable learning difficulties, described in statements of special educational need, sometimes entitling them to receive extra help in class. The percentage of pupils in the school who have statements covering a wide range of special needs is three times as many as is the case nationally. The progress made by these pupils is particularly impressive. For example, in 2000, 29 Year 11 subject entries for Certificates of Achievement were made for lower attaining pupils, and 28 resulted in distinctions.

The school provides pupils with a strong sense of the importance of spiritual, and consequent moral and social, values through relationships which are very good, giving pupils positive attitudes to school, ensuring their very good behaviour.

13. A strong sense of spiritual community is alive in the school. The work of all its members supports its essential mission to develop pupils' spiritual and moral maturity through prayer, caring and respect for others. Parents recognise and appreciate the underlying spiritual values which their children gain from the work of the school, including those who are not of the Roman Catholic faith. Prayer and thoughtful reflection begin and end the school day. Teachers and pupils take these occasions very seriously, and pupils often deliver prayers to their class without embarrassment and with the confident knowledge that they will be thoughtfully received and considered. Assembly is used well to further the spiritual purposes of the school. The theme of one assembly seen presented and advocated Christian love and the moral and social implications of behaving as a practising Christian. Pupils and staff were given opportunity for quiet reflection on the ideal and how it affected their day-to-day lives. The occasion was very well organised and pupils were very well behaved in accommodation which was barely adequate in size for all members of the school to be present together.

14. The school's essential spiritual purpose influences directly the very good moral and social provision made for pupils. Pupils are influenced by the school's values to behave very well in class and around the school. They show interest and concern for the well-being of others. They are interested in the work of friends and fellow members of their classes because of the underlying spiritual values within the school. Pupils respect each other and work very well together in friendship. For example, after co-operating extremely well with each other in a warm-up prior to work on lay-up technique in basketball in a Year 9 physical education lesson, pupils freely praised each other, enjoying others' success in their work as though it were their own. In a Year 11 design and technology lesson, pupils worked individually on their projects with well-judged support from their teachers, but took a mature interest in each other's work, appreciating what others were achieving. Teachers expect pupils to work to their highest possible standard, and praise and reward them for their efforts. It is not acceptable that pupils should waste their talents because the school's mission is to ensure that all realise the opportunities provided for them.

15. A practical expression of the spiritual and moral purposes of the school is the very good relationships which exist among pupils and between pupils and teachers. For example, in a powerful Year 9 personal and social education lesson on bullying, pupils were able to express themselves confidently, thoughtfully and well, in response to challenging comments on the subject by the teacher. All learned much more of how the actions of an individual can affect others and very good attitudes and behaviour were very well promoted.

The school takes great care of pupils, ensuring their welfare and supporting them to achieve their best standard.

16. The quality of care which the school takes for its pupils is excellent. Care for pupils is a practical expression of the spiritual purpose which guides the life of the school. Systems are managed with great skill and commitment by the deputy headteacher. Good working relationships with partner primary schools are in place and transfer of pupils between Year 6 and Year 7 is well managed, so that each person's needs are known on entry to the school. Review and discussion of each individual pupil's work, progress and well-being take place regularly, engaging senior staff, tutors and subject teachers. All aspects of each pupil's life and work in school are considered, and concerns are pursued and rewards given, as appropriate. Identified pupils are sometimes closely tracked throughout the working day to

help staff understand their difficulties, and provide evidence upon which to base the means to help them to achieve higher personal or academic standards.

17. Support for pupils to achieve their best standard of work is very good. Targets are set for each pupil to achieve in national tests at the end of Year 9, and at GCSE. The close monitoring of progress leads to remedial action if necessary. Regular reviews of progress identify underachieving pupils, who are helped to achieve their potential in learning by plans drawn up by staff. In Year 9, pupils are interviewed to discuss their standards of achievement, and how this may affect their subject choices in Year 10. Pupils in Year 11 receive individual mentoring following GCSE trial examinations. After review and discussion with the deputy headteacher, pupils at risk of underachieving are assigned to a teacher-volunteer, who arranges weekly monitoring and review with the individual. The process applies to high attaining pupils with the potential to achieve GCSE A* grades, as well as to others. Parents are involved throughout the process to ensure that pupils receive all the support and encouragement possible to achieve their best.

18. Very effective use is made of the available assessment data about pupils. They are tested soon after entry to the school in Year 7 on a range of measures, and these become the initial benchmark from which the school can judge progress and identify underachievement. The data available increases as pupils proceed through the school, and provides a basis of expectation for teachers to judge pupils' academic potential. The support process within the school for pupils is well informed by assessment data and, with good teaching, has contributed to the impressive achievements of pupils, particularly in GCSE examinations in recent years.

Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and enables them to achieve their best standards.

19. Seven per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need, a percentage considerably higher than in most schools. Many others are registered by the school as needing special help with learning. Pupils' needs are carefully identified by the school and the special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with staff in deciding what methods to adopt to advance the learning of individual pupils. Individual education plans are detailed and check-lists are derived from these for teachers to use as practical guidance with which to help each pupil. An intensive Year 7 support programme in reading is very effective in improving pupils' standards.

20. Support for pupils in class by teachers and support assistants is very good and considerable training has taken place to assist teachers to make the curriculum for pupils with special needs fully inclusive. Well-trained and qualified assistants are well aware of pupils' needs and provide very good support for individuals or small groups in class. Co-ordination is effective and assistants know what work is to be followed by the classes to which they are assigned so that they can provide the maximum help to individuals. Their rapport with pupils is very good.

21. The support which pupils with special needs receive, overall, is of high quality and helps them to make very good progress to achieve their best standards. For example, pupils regularly gain five or more GCSE grades A* to G, an impressive achievement given the learning and other difficulties that many have. Certificate of Achievement results in 2000 were very high.

22. Effective liaison with partner primary schools, destinations for leavers and outside agencies is well maintained. Close links are in place with parents, who praise staff and express appreciation for the quality of work done on behalf of their children.

The school has an excellent relationship with parents, who are very interested and supportive.

23. The school has the confidence of parents, who strongly support its spiritual and moral purposes. They further regard these purposes as means by which their children can achieve their personal and intellectual best. Parents are very interested in the school, as shown by the unusually high number of responses to the questionnaire expressing views about it. An overwhelming majority of parents have confidence in the school's leadership and feel able to approach the school with concerns or questions about their children. They are convinced that their children like school, behave well and are expected to work hard and achieve their best so that they make good progress with the help of good teaching.

24. Relationships between home and school are strong and support pupils' learning well. The vast majority of parents take up the opportunities provided to come into school for consultation with teachers, and the numbers of parents who attend present organisational difficulties which the school has yet to resolve. Parents' main reservation about the school is in the range of extra-curricular activities it provides for their children. Opportunities are constrained by inadequate indoor accommodation for sport. However, opportunities in the expressive arts and for pupils' social development, as in retreats and residential experience, are good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

More use of information and communication technology in all subjects; provision of the statutory requirement for the subject for all Year 10 pupils; more modern computers.

25. Some useful work in information and communication technology is done in some subjects, for example in English, mathematics and French. The quality of pupils' work using computers in French, for example in Year 8, is very good and enhances their learning of French well. Provision overall, however, is insufficient across the curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils follow a course in information and communication technology in one lesson per week in Years 7 and 9. In Year 8, provision is intended to be wholly through work in other subjects. All subjects identify some opportunities to use computers, but the lack of continuity in pupils' learning across the three years of the key stage fails to ensure progressive practice and development of the necessary skills. The Year 7 curriculum for information and communication technology aims to develop very basic skills, with little opportunity for pupils to solve problems or to reflect critically on their work or that of others. In the current year, pupils in Year 10 are following the same course, at the same level, in information and communication technology as pupils in Year 9, because the school is moving to a new basic course for all. However, a consequence is that Year 10 pupils' work in information and communication technology is currently below the level usually expected.

26. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a basic course in information and communication technology, but opportunities to use it across the curriculum are uneven. Good use is made of the few computers available in music, for example, but, overall, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to enhance their computer skills in all subjects. Pupils in Year 10 who no longer follow a course in design and technology mainly fail to get their statutory entitlement to the strand of information and communication technology which enables them to measure, record, control and automate events.

27. Pupils' learning in information and communication technology is constrained by the below average ratio of modern computers to pupils in the school. The school has purchased

some new machines, which are networked, and recently established access to the Internet, and there are modest plans to extend provision further. Subjects have schemes of work which identify where computers can be used, but access to the computer room to undertake those units of work is not possible on some occasions because it is already in use for lessons specifically for information and communication technology. The computers which are located in different subject areas are old, and although some purposeful use is made of these, new equipment is needed if pupils are to have sufficient opportunity to develop their skills in information and communication technology to the extent that they should.

The curriculum in Year 10. A statement of principles, current aims and policy for the curriculum against which changed provision in Year 10 should be evaluated.

28. The school has a policy statement which defines the aims and objectives of curricular provision. This statement requires revision because of changes made to its current Year 10 curriculum affecting most pupils. These changes have reduced the range of different subjects followed by some Year 10 pupils. The school has taken full opportunity provided by new national rules which allow the National Curriculum for Years 10 and 11 to be amended to allow pupils to specialise more in a particular curricular area. A considerable number of pupils are not following as broad a curriculum as the one required nationally until new rules and procedures became operative from September 2000. A small number of pupils have substituted some subjects for vocational studies at college, and this provides a good opportunity to extend the curriculum to meet their needs, and for these pupils disapplication from some subjects of the National Curriculum is fully justified. However, others have been allowed to discontinue subjects which could be of benefit to them at age 16, reducing the overall breadth of their studies. For example, most pupils wanted to discontinue the study of French, the only modern foreign language available in the school, and have been allowed to do so, to extend their studies in, for example, the humanities or the arts.

29. The school has properly followed the procedures to disapply some Year 10 pupils from either a modern foreign language or from design and technology. Parents are satisfied with the revised provision which enables their children to specialise in subjects which they enjoy and in which they are likely to be motivated to succeed. However, the new rules specify that pupils should usually be expected to follow the required subjects of the National Curriculum, and that disapplication of pupils from the usual range of subjects should be exceptional provision, because curricular breadth remains an essential principle in Years 10 and 11. The school has disappplied most pupils from a required subject of the National Curriculum. Although these pupils have extended their studies, for example in the humanities or the arts, they have reduced curricular breadth by omission of a subject which is usually required, a modern foreign language or design and technology. The school expects all pupils to follow a GCSE course in religious education, and this is highly appropriate, given the school's religious nature and the importance given to spiritual and moral values. However, this reduces the number of other subjects which pupils can follow in Years 10 and 11. The school needs to evaluate the impact of the new arrangements given the reduced range of subjects which some pupils are studying. The present curricular statement of aims and purposes is no longer an adequate means with which to do this. Reconsideration of essential purposes justifying the content of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is needed so that the impact of the changes which have been made can be properly evaluated, and amended, if necessary. The school should provide itself with a secure basis upon which it can make an informed judgement as to the effects of curricular change on the range of pupils' knowledge, skills, understanding and choices at age 16.

Accommodation, especially for sport.

30. The school makes the most of its accommodation. Its popularity has led to an increase in the roll by a quarter since 1995 and this has increased pressure on accommodation. Although provision for science has been improved, some classrooms used by other subjects are small for the numbers of pupils who must use them. Plans have been approved and funding has been provided for significant improvements to the accommodation, and the music and special educational needs departments will be relocated. Other departments, for example mathematics and modern foreign languages, will benefit from closer grouping of subject rooms giving further opportunities for departmental co-ordination and use of shared resources. However, indoor accommodation for sport on-site is inadequate. Pupils travel to a local sports centre to use accommodation and facilities there which are not available at school. This involves loss of time during the school day. Pupils sometimes make the journey during inclement weather and resume their work at school when they may sometimes be wet and uncomfortable, a concern raised by some parents. The school intends to provide better indoor accommodation for sport, but approval for this development has not yet been received. Improved indoor accommodation for sport is urgently needed to avoid loss of time for learning, to ensure pupils' welfare and to extend the opportunity for extra-curricular sport on-site.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

31. In order for the school to improve standards further, governors and management should:

- (1) Enhance pupils' use of information and communication technology in all subjects and meet statutory requirements for the subject for all pupils in Year 10, by fully co-ordinating provision across the curriculum and providing additional modern computers to extend pupils' experience in their use. (See *paragraphs 25, 26, 27.*)
- (2) Revise the existing statement of policy and aims for the curriculum. Reconsider the purposes, objectives and subject range for Years 10 and 11, and evaluate the effects of changed provision in Year 10. Maximise optional subject choices for pupils in future Years 10 and 11 so that they can specialise where this is appropriate, but make disapplication from required subjects of the National Curriculum exceptional, so as to maintain curricular breadth for all. (See *paragraphs 28, 29.*)
- (3) Realise current planned improvements to accommodation for learning, and improve indoor accommodation for sport on-site, by all available means. (See *paragraph 30.*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	34	50	16	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	369	0
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	70	0

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6
National comparative data	8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	32	43	75

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	19	24	19
	Girls	37	29	20
	Total	56	53	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (78)	72 (68)	52 (69)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (34)	41 (36)	27 (35)
	National	28(35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	17	25	22
	Girls	35	32	30
	Total	52	57	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (78)	76 (70)	69 (78)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (34)	37 (49)	32 (45)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	1999	31	30	61

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	17	30	30
	Girls	21	29	30
	Total	38	59	60
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (63)	97 (100)	98 (100)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.9)	95.8 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	44 (44)

per pupil	National	38 (36.8)
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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	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	366
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	3	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	10	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)	24.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	210

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	19.7
Key Stage 4	19.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	988752
Total expenditure	961097
Expenditure per pupil	2655
Balance brought forward from previous year	44105
Balance carried forward to next year	71760

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

369

Number of questionnaires returned

291

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	52	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	48	3	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	55	2	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	56	10	4	3
The teaching is good.	41	52	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	45	10	1	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	32	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	27	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	48	7	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	58	38	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	46	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	40	20	3	14

Numbers may not total 100 per cent because of rounding

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are strongly committed to the school and appreciate its work on behalf of their children. The issues of concern to some parents, especially provision of extra-curricular activities, are addressed in the report.