

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

**St Bede's R C Voluntary Aided  
Comprehensive School**

Consett Road, Lanchester, Durham, DH7 0RD

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114328

Headteacher: Mr E G Dunn

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan Hamilton  
2458

Dates of inspection: 14 - 16 November 2000

Inspection number: 223854

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Voluntary aided  
Age range of pupils: 11-18  
Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Consett Road  
Lanchester  
Durham  
Postcode: DH7 0RD

Telephone number: 01207 520424

Fax number: 01207 521114

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Father J Park

Date of previous inspection: 25 September 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
Mr Alan Hamilton	Registered inspector
Mrs Eva Mills	Lay inspector
Mr Peter Parish	Team inspector
Mrs Barbara Jordan	Team inspector
Mr Alan F Heinzman	Team inspector
Mrs Joy Edwards	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

North Tyneside Council  
School Effectiveness and Raising Standards Unit  
Schools Services  
Stephenson House  
Stephenson Street  
North Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
NE30 1QA

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6-9</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
 <b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	 <b>10-17</b>
 <b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	 <b>18-20</b>
 <b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	 <b>20</b>
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	 <b>21-25</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Bede's School is a mixed comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18. Oversubscribed, as at the time of the previous inspection in 1995, it has 1238 pupils on roll which makes it bigger than the average secondary school. In 1998 St Bede's was granted Language College status, as a specialist secondary school. St Bede's draws the majority of its pupils from nine RC primary schools in small towns or villages some areas of which suffer significant social disadvantage. The bussing arrangements make a considerable impact on the life of the school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (9.3%) is below the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (12.5%) is below the national average for comprehensive schools. The percentage with statements of such need (2.0%) is broadly in line with the national average. The school admits a larger than average proportion of pupils who have reached levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science tests, taken at the end of key stage 2, above the national average.

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

St Bede's is a very effective school. Its many strengths outweigh its few weaknesses. Very good teaching, and very good behaviour and attitudes to work from pupils, create a climate of learning which sustains very good progress and a commitment to high standards throughout the school. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Standards of attainment in the core subjects at key stage 3 are well above the national average. Attainment is above average in GCSE external examinations compared to all schools nationally and well above average in comparison with similar schools.
- The teaching is of very good quality and enables pupils of all abilities to make very good progress and achieve high standards.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school are very good. The very good relationships, the climate for learning and commitment to high standards combine to create a very positive ethos throughout the school.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils' personal development is enhanced further by the way in which the school supports pupils' learning, through opportunities to participate in an extensive range of curricular enrichment activities.
- The school fulfils its designation as a Language College with great success.
- Very effective curricular and pastoral liaison with partnership primary schools facilitates continuity of education significantly and aids transition from primary to secondary school.

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

- Further develop the models for change to the structure and timing of the school day as indicated in the school development plan's proposals, to enable teachers and pupils to work more effectively and meet the minimum recommended teaching time for pupils at key stages 3 and 4.
- Improve provision for the use of information communication technology (ICT) in all subject areas to give pupils greater access to computers and meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum.
- Development of the school's programme of self evaluation to identify strengths in teaching and to disseminate good practice across the school.
- Revision of the homework policy to ensure consistency and clarity in communicating expectations about homework to pupils and parents.

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

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

The school has made very good progress overall since its previous inspection in September 1995. The standards that pupils achieve have improved significantly at key stages 3 and 4. Results in national tests and in GCSE

examinations have increased at a faster rate than nationally and are well above national averages. Sixth form provision is good and GCE 'A' level results are above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved resulting in higher standards of achievement. The school was granted Language College status in 1998. Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues identified in the last inspection although some work is still needed to meet fully, issues in respect of monitoring of teaching, dissemination of good practice, improving provision for ICT and resolution of problems associated with the structure and timing of the school day. There is commitment to improvement through school self evaluation.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 Tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Key Stage 3 Tests	B	A	A	A
GCSE examinations	A	B	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	C	B	C	

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results in the national tests for 14 year olds have been consistently above or well above the national average since 1997 for both boys and girls and have shown an improvement above the national trend. In 2000, the school's performance in the English tests was very high in comparison with similar schools, well above average in science tests and above average in the mathematics tests. The school's performance in all core subjects was well above average in comparison with similar schools. Boys have overtaken girls and achieved better results in mathematics and science although girls continued to do better than boys in English. The differential in attainment between boys and girls has reduced significantly over the last four years. All pupils make very good progress including those with special educational needs.

GCSE results have shown a consistent and significant improvement since the previous inspection. Results in the 2000 GCSE examinations are above the national average and well above average compared to similar schools. The school set appropriately challenging targets for the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more passes at grades A\*-C and exceeded them. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A\*-C and the average point score per pupil is above average when compared with similar schools for the last three years. The difference in attainment between boys and girls has reduced since the previous inspection. A very appropriate curriculum has been provided for lower attaining pupils who are well motivated and achieve considerable success in alternative accredited courses.

In the sixth form standards of attainment in GNVQ courses are good. Results in the GCE A/AS level examinations are above the national average in comparison with all schools for the last four years. Although the average point score fell in 2000 to 15.7 per student from 18.5 in 1999 almost 90% of students achieved two or more grades A to E. Of these, almost two-thirds obtained two or more grades A to C. Results in mathematics were particularly noteworthy with 76% of a large cohort of students obtaining A to C grades.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment

Attitudes to the school	Very good and a strength in the school. Pupils have a strong work ethic and are keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Standards of behaviour throughout the school are high. Pupils are polite, courteous and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils contribute to the very positive ethos of the school. Pupils accept responsibilities willingly.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.

Pupils show a mature approach to their work. A very good climate for learning has been established. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a desire to achieve high standards.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is a strength of the school. In all the lessons observed, teaching is satisfactory or better. It is very good or excellent in 30% of lessons, good in 45% of lessons and satisfactory in 25% of lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In the sample of lessons seen, very good or excellent lessons were in English, mathematics, biology, geography, French, ICT and history. Inspectors found no weak areas of teaching in the school.

Teachers at St Bede's have a secure command of their subject and teach with confidence. They are skilled at questioning which challenges pupils' thinking and raises attainment. The active involvement of all pupils in their learning and the teachers' high expectations of behaviour and work rate are features of lessons, as are good pace and planning. This very effective teaching gives pupils of all abilities confidence in their learning.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a wide range of learning experiences, enhanced by a very good range of extra curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well supported with detailed individual education plans (IEPs) containing good subject-specific guidance for academic staff, tutors and parents. The work of support staff is well co-ordinated.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for the personal development of pupils is very good. Provision for spiritual and moral development is excellent and very good for social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils very well. The pastoral system is well structured and very effective. Staff know their pupils well and make good provision for their individual needs. Progress is tracked carefully and effectively.

Provision for pupils personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a very great strength and clearly reflects the vibrant Catholic ethos that lies at the heart of the school. Very good systems are in place for the review of pupils' academic performance. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through the use of well designed and effective pupils planners. The school is making good progress in introducing the revised National Curriculum although some subject areas do not have good access for ICT and National Curriculum requirements in ICT across all subjects are not being met fully for all pupils. The amount



of time allocated to teaching the curriculum is below national recommendations. The curricular provision for the sixth form is cost effective.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership from the headteacher, senior management team, heads of department and pastoral tutors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They play a very effective role in shaping the direction and ethos of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates most of its work very well. Assessment data is used very effectively to evaluate progress and set whole school and individual pupil targets. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school. Further development of school self-evaluation is required.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used and deployed in accordance with the school's priorities. School development is supported by detailed and very effective financial planning.

The headteacher and senior staff manage the school very well and create a very effective climate for learning. Financial administration is very good. The principles of best value are applied well.

### 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>• Children make good progress</li> </ul> <p>The school works closely with parents. Teaching is good. The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like the school.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Leadership and management are good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's expectations of pupils' work-rate and achievement.</li> <li>• Organisation of parents' consultation evenings.</li> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The condition of the girls' toilets.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with all the parents' positive comments. They also agree that homework arrangements and the organisation of some parents' consultation evenings could be improved. Inspectors agree with parents' comments about the condition of the girls' toilets for pupils in years 9, 10 and 11 and that they should be improved. They disagree with parents' adverse comments about the school's expectations of pupils' work-rate and achievement and their reservations about extra-curricular enrichment activities outside lessons which inspection evidence identifies as being a strength of the school. Almost three fifths of parents returned questionnaires (57%).

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **1? Standards of attainment in the core subjects at key stage 3 are well above the national average. Attainment is above average in GCSE external examinations compared to all schools nationally and well above average in comparison with similar schools.**

1. The rise in attainment shows that the school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. Improvements in the key stage 3 tests in mathematics and science in 2000 were very good and in English were outstanding. In English tests in 2000 85% of pupils achieved level 5 or above compared to a national average of 63% and 65% of pupils achieved level 6 or higher compared with a national average of 24%. In mathematics and science tests the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above were 77% and 73% respectively, 12% and 14% higher than the national averages. Furthermore, the percentage of pupils obtaining the higher level 6 or above was significantly above the national average. Overall, results in key stage 3 tests are well above average in comparison with national standards for all schools and for similar schools.

2. In 2000, standards achieved in GCSE were above the national average and well above average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils obtaining 5 or more A\*-C grades in GCSE rose from 51% in 1999 to 57% in 2000. Improvements since the previous inspection in 1995 show a very marked upward trend.

3. In 2000, results at GCSE grades A\*-C were particularly good in English, mathematics, science, business studies, art and design, history, French, music, physical education, Spanish, food technology and media studies with high proportions of the entry gaining A\*/A grades. The award of Language College status in 1998 recognises the high attainment in modern foreign languages.

4. While results in GCSE examinations based upon the average total GCSE points per pupil are well above average in comparison with similar schools, variations occur. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more A\*-C grades has been consistently above average for the period 1997 to 2000. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A\*-G grades over this period of time has been below average although the percentage of pupils achieving one or more A\*-G grades has been above average. The variations are explained because the school has recognised that a small number of lower attaining pupils may not have been best served by the traditional GCSE courses on offer. As a result a number of pupils follow alternative accredited courses including City and Guilds numeracy and communication skills, ASDAN, GNVQ Units in business, leisure and tourism, certificate of achievement courses in French, Spanish and design technology, Japanese, basic communications and food handlers' certificate courses. These courses better match the needs of many pupils to a curriculum where they can expect greater success. The courses are very successful in sustaining the motivation and interest of lower attaining pupils. All pupils including those with special educational needs make very good progress through the school.

5. Pupils at all levels in the school make very good progress. Typically, at key stage 3, boys are about one and a half terms ahead of their peers nationally and girls are a little over two terms ahead. The leadership and management of the school have been very effective in putting into place systems to promote accelerated progress. There is very good practice in setting targets for individual pupils. The school exceeded its targets for 1999 and 2000 in key stage 3 tests and in GCSE results. The above average standards which most pupils have attained when they enter the school are sustained and improved through key stages 3 and 4. The LEA monitors external examination data in terms of "value-added" indicators. St Bede's school leads within the LEA in "Differences from predicted 1998 and 1999 scores for boys and girls in Year 11 in all subjects".

6. There are some differences between the relative performance of boys and girls but this difference is being reduced at key stage 3 and at key stage 4. Boys achieved better than girls in the key stage 3 tests in 2000 in mathematics and science, and, although girls continued to outperform boys in English, the gap in attainment narrowed to 4.7% as compared to a national difference of 20%. The erosion of this gender difference in attainment between boys and girls is also apparent in GCSE results, although a significant difference remains. However, the differential in attainment expressed as an average point score at GCSE has reduced from 11.5 points in 1995 to 9.2 points in 2000. Overall, in both key stage 3 tests and in GCSE results, both boys and girls results are above or well above the national average. The school has achieved a rising trend in its key stage 3 and key stage 4 test results at a faster rate than the national average.

7. The standard of work seen during the inspection matched the high attainment in examinations. In English, mathematics and science the work seen was above expectations.

## **English**

8. Pupils' attainment in English when they enter year 7 is well above the national average. At key stage 3 standards in English have been consistently above the national average and in 2000 are well above the national average when compared with similar schools. Inspection evidence confirms that these high standards in English are being sustained throughout key stage 3. Pupils are learning to analyse and respond to a range of texts with skill. This was apparent in the way that a class of pupils in year 9 quickly assimilated the structure, layout and language features of writing about foxes. The needs of pupils of all abilities are being met through well-structured lessons designed to extend and improve pupils' reading and writing skills and through the use of interesting and relevant texts. A class of pupils in year 7 working to a simple poetic structure is helped to use figurative language effectively. Standards of reading and comprehension are generally above expectations for this key stage. In writing, the majority of pupils produce well formed, often complex, sentences showing good awareness of correct grammar and punctuation. Most pupils have good standards of spelling.

9. At key stage 4 the percentages of pupils achieving A\*-C and A\*-G grades in the GCSE examinations in both language and literature are above the national percentages. The teachers have high expectations for their pupils' performance in examinations. Inspection findings confirm that pupils in years 10 and 11 are attaining standards in English commensurate with their predicted grades. Pupils in years 10 and 11 follow well planned courses. Coursework is carefully monitored to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential and pupils are also carefully and systematically prepared for examination. A strength of the department is in the way it helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work and supports them in order to sustain improvements. This is an important contributory factor to the school's above average examination results. Pupils in year 11 studying 'Of Mice and Men' demonstrate competence in selecting and categorising relevant themes, events and relationships. They achieve high standards in their work. Pupils working on the Anthology are recognising links across the poems and are becoming confident in comparing and contrasting poems by different poets.

## **Mathematics**

10. Standards of attainment in mathematics throughout the key stages are above the national average. Over the last three years standards have risen steadily. The school outperforms the local and the national average at each key stage. At key stage 3 the school has made a 15% improvement at level 5 and above and the percentage of pupils' reaching level 6 and above has also improved significantly. At key stage 4 the percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations continues to demonstrate an upward trend. In the last three years the standards achieved at St. Bede's have been well above those for the county and the national averages. The percentage achieving A\*-G has also improved significantly.

11. The department monitors pupils' performance very well, analysing the results from termly tests to identify strengths and weaknesses in individual pupil's knowledge and understanding. All pupils are given personal target grades and are well informed by their teachers about their progress towards reaching these targets.

12. Attainment in the modular 'A' Level Mathematics examinations also reflects a significant improvement in the number of students attaining higher grades over the past four years. In 2000 the school recorded a 100% pass rate from a cohort of 17 pupils, with 76% achieving A-C grades.

13. The mathematics department benefits from very effective leadership and management. Since the last inspection, systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of pupils have been substantially improved so that pupils receive detailed feedback about their performance in meeting individual targets.

14. Homework is set regularly to a departmental timetable and recorded by each class teacher. Pupils are instructed to enter homework details in their planners to ensure that both they and parents are aware of the department's expectations in respect of homework. The setting and marking of homework are monitored thoroughly and clear guidance is provided to teachers about how their comments can be modified to help pupils analyse their performance and improve.

## Science

15. In science, standards at the end of key stage 3 are above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Pupils' learning skills of observation, drawing conclusions and solving simple problems are developing well. Pupils are able to carry out experiments measuring the paths of rays reflected from a mirror accurately and can describe and draw conclusions about the pattern they find.

16. At key stage 4, all pupils follow a programme of study that leads to GCSE accreditation for either single award science or double award science. The school has a higher proportion of pupils studying single award science than is found nationally. Pupils studying double award science are achieving levels which are significantly above the national average (2000: school A\*-C = 61.4%, national: 48.9%). Good project work is seen from pupils, such as a project on the solar system completed by a pupil in year 11. Pupils show competence when carrying out investigations. They are able to select and use appropriate equipment quickly and efficiently when doing experiments. A higher proportion of girls than boys achieve grades A\*-C in both double award science and single award science. In the sixth form, students study the separate sciences for A and AS level. Students are attaining levels expected for students following A level courses.

17. At key stages 3 and 4, and at post-16, high levels of attainment are being achieved because of the secure knowledge and good classroom management skills of teachers. Teachers have a clear understanding of the assessment requirements for public examinations and assessment at the end of key stages. They regularly communicate the requirements to pupils. Good support systems are in place to ensure that newly qualified teachers are able to manage different teaching groups effectively.

**2. The teaching is of very good quality and enables pupils of all abilities to make very good progress and achieve high standards.**

18. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is satisfactory in 25 per cent of lessons seen, good in 45 per cent, very good in 21 per cent, and excellent in 9 per cent of lessons. This high quality teaching is one of the main reasons why the school is successful in achieving high standards.

19. Successful lessons are well planned and matched to the needs of the pupils. In an English lesson with pupils in year 9 whose ability level is well below expectations for age, the teaching is focused upon ensuring success and progress for the pupils, whilst also building up their self-esteem and confidence. The teaching strategies include short tasks, the viewing of short video extracts, regular changes of activity to sustain interest and motivation, and the use of humour. In a French lesson in Year 9 the needs of a high attaining set of pupils are being met through confident teaching entirely in the target language, skillful questioning and good feedback to the pupils. In both examples the teachers are able to support those pupils who need it and challenge the thinking of those who find the lesson easy to understand.

20. Pupils with special educational needs are being supported effectively. IEPs include detailed guidance for teachers on strategies to use with each pupil as well as methodology to avoid.

21. Good lessons are planned in detail. These lessons include a re-visit to earlier learning and a plenary session. In single (ie 35 minutes) lessons this structure is hard to maintain and opportunities to consolidate learning are often missed. Teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves, as when biology students in year 13 develop their own hypotheses from the results of a complex experiment involving starch, enzymes and acid. Also, in a year 11 mathematics lesson where pupils are working on travel graphs the tasks set by the teacher are ideal to consolidate understanding and to provide further challenge.

22. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at key stage 3 is very effective. Pupils acquire good skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy which underpin their learning in other subjects. In addition, their positive attitudes and very good behaviour contribute substantially to the good standards of achievement seen across the school. For example, in a history lesson for pupils in year 9 about the causes of the Second World War, pupils work very effectively in groups of three, remain on task, sustain concentration and complete their work to strict time limits.

23. A particular strength of the teaching is the expectation that high standards will be achieved. This is found in many lessons such as in a mathematics lesson with lower attaining pupils in year 10 in which a minimum amount of work and a time are set for pupils to solve equations. They respond well and work hard throughout the lesson. In a French lesson with year 12 the students are expected to sustain listening and understanding for an extended amount of time, at the same time making notes in the target language and asking questions. These students enjoy the challenge and work with confidence at a level above expectations for this stage of their course.

24. Teachers at St Bede's have a secure command of their subjects and teach them with enthusiasm and confidence. They are skilled at questioning which probes pupils' understanding, challenges their thinking and thus raises attainment. In a year 7 geography lesson the teacher brings local knowledge to bear in helping pupils to understand river systems clearly. A short visit to a recently flooded culvert in the school grounds to show the effect of high, continuous rainfall aids understanding. Good questioning in a year 11 English lesson enables all pupils to analyse and successfully categorise significant aspects of the novel 'Of Mice and Men' in preparation for an examination. When pupils are working on tasks teachers monitor progress and often intervene with questions that check understanding further. Students in year 12 are helped to a deeper

understanding of the February Revolution in Russia through very effective questioning at key points in the lesson. The teaching encourages pupils to think for themselves. Teachers frequently use open questions and pupils know that their ideas will be well received; in most lessons pupils are happy to express views and opinions with confidence.

25. In many lessons a well designed homework is set. The best practice is found in mathematics lessons where the homework is clear and is given to pupils and recorded in their pupils' planners well before the end of the lesson. Homework from 35 minute lessons is often completion of the written task begun in the lesson but not finished because of lack of time.

26. Pupils learn effectively at St Bede's. They are given well-targeted support from teachers in lessons to help them and as a result they make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils in year 11 make good progress in understanding the causes of the Cold War through application of key skills in source interpretation. Students in year 12 quickly grasp the key features of relational databases in an ICT lesson and show they have a good grasp of the terminology. Most pupils are keen to learn and their motivation and commitment are features which help them achieve high standards.

27. Another feature of teaching which helps pupils to achieve high standards is the way in which they are helped to understand what they need to do to improve or to achieve a higher grade in an examination. This is mainly achieved through individual feedback to students in lessons, written commentary on assignments and discussions between pupils and teachers. Teachers give substantial amounts of their time to supporting individual pupils.

**3. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school are very good. The very good relationships, the climate for learning and commitment to high standards combine to create a very positive ethos throughout the school.**

28. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. The ethos of the school promotes pupils' high attainment and achievement. Pupils are keen to describe those aspects of school life which they find most pleasing, emphasising the caring, friendly attitudes of pupils and teachers, the absence of bullying, the wide range of extra curricular activities, opportunities to support charities and the new facilities for modern foreign languages. They show maturity and a high degree of loyalty and respect in making suggestions as to how their school could be further improved.

29. Attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic, and well motivated. For example in science pupils showed considerable enthusiasm in carrying out an investigation. In particular they derived great enjoyment from observing the effect of dissolving potassium permanganate crystals. When teachers are explaining or demonstrating pupils listen and watch attentively. They respond quickly and confidently to questioning and in their turn pose appropriate and relevant questions of their own.

30. The majority of pupils concentrate well, work hard and persevere with challenging tasks. They work productively in a variety of groupings, including whole class settings, in pairs, in small groups or when working independently. They share their ideas and are willing and confident enough to explain their reasoning. Pupils respond enthusiastically to challenges. In one interactive lesson on the causes of the Second World War, the enthusiasm of the pupils was described as being "electric".

31.

31. Pupils show understanding towards each other, are patient and await their turn correctly when using equipment. In group and class discussions pupils respect the opinions and viewpoints of their peers.

32. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils are polite, well mannered, courteous and helpful to visitors. They move about the school in an orderly fashion, particularly at the change-over of lessons. This high standard of behaviour is maintained by the vigilance and organisational skills of teachers who monitor the movement of pupils in the school. At the beginning of lessons pupils arrive promptly to classes, enter quietly and settle quickly to work with a minimum of fuss. In the majority of lessons pupils come prepared with the basic equipment needed for that lesson. Good behaviour in practical lessons reflects well-rehearsed procedures for use of equipment, which pre-empt potential problems. This was evident in a single practical design and technology lesson when the manner in which pupils organised their work enabled them to maximise use of the limited time available. Effective classroom management ensures that any less than satisfactory behaviour is quickly addressed. The school uses its well developed system of positive referrals effectively, recognising and rewarding good behaviour.

33. Relationships throughout the school, among the pupils themselves and between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils work well together and learn from each other's ideas and suggestions. They collaborate well in friendship groups, willingly share resources and help each other. Where pupils engage in peer assessment as they did in a design and technology lesson, they make criticisms of each other's work in a supportive and constructive manner. In practical subjects pupils co-operate well, assisting each other in the setting up and in the operation of equipment and machinery.

34. Mutual respect between pupils and teachers is a feature of the school's work. This commitment to high standards in attitudes, behaviour and relationships creates a positive climate for teaching and learning and makes a very significant impact on pupils' attainment and progress

**4. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils' personal development is enhanced further by the way in which the school supports pupils' learning through opportunities to participate in an extensive range of curricular enrichment activities.**

35. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and clearly reflects the vibrant Catholic ethos which lies at its heart.

36. Spirituality is the foundation of the school's values, attitudes and beliefs and is central to its mission statement. Throughout the school there are many examples of how pupils are encouraged to develop their own spirituality. The school chapel is available for prayer and a Mass is held there each Wednesday to which everyone is invited. Collective Worship takes place daily for all pupils either within a year or tutor group. There are very strong links with the parish; local clergy are regular visitors and take part in many activities. The school has an excellent chaplaincy team and will soon have its own chaplain who will be supported by the parish. There are also very strong links with Ushaw College in Durham and two students are welcomed into the school each year for training.

37. The school actively encourages all pupils to adopt good moral attitudes based upon the Christian values that it promotes and staff act as good role models. Pupils have clearly adopted these values into their lives. The behaviour and attitude of pupils is very good in lessons and around the school at all times. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. Everyone in the school shows respect and has a caring attitude for each other. The school actively supports a very large number of charities locally, nationally and abroad. These include the Good Shepherd Appeal, Cafod, Yellow Brick Road, Samaritans, Operation Christmas Child, India 2000 and Father Joe in Peru.

38. Pupils work very effectively in a variety of social groupings in and outside of classrooms. They are given many opportunities to meet a large number of visitors from outside the school. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular and cultural activities outside normal lessons. There are a significant number of clubs, sports, music and drama activities both at lunchtimes and after school. The school newspaper club which meets during the lunch break has operated successfully to produce a high quality newspaper which received a distinction in The Times International Newspaper Day challenge. Pupils participating in the club have access to good quality ICT facilities. These activities are further enhanced by a range of educational visits and exchanges. Pupils also benefit from a well developed personal, social and health education programme. This includes good support for the writing of CVs in key stage 3 and the preparation for work experience at key stage 4. Pupils in year 11 are given good opportunities to consider post-16 options at the local colleges of further education as well as at the school. There are many subject support classes for GCSE pupils. Field studies and educational visits to Northern Ireland, France, Spain, Germany and India help to broaden pupils' personal development.
39. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through the use of well designed and detailed pupil planners in which they record homework, assignment details, achievement and other important information.
40. The school is justifiably proud of the highly successful exchange programme it has developed with Drumragh Integrated College at Omagh in Northern Ireland. The link was established in 1999 and the sporting, social, musical and other cultural activities which characterise the exchanges contribute immensely towards pupils' personal development and their understanding of issues related to world peace and reconciliation.
41. The opportunities offered to pupils through this extensive, varied and well structured provision are having a very positive influence upon pupils' personal development. They are helping pupils to develop into mature, well educated young people by requiring them to accept responsibility and use their initiative.

##### **5. The school fulfills its designation as a Language College with great success.**

42. The school is discharging its aims as a Language College very effectively. The study of at least one modern foreign language is compulsory for all pupils until the age of 16 and the school is aiming to increase the number of pupils opting to continue studying French and Spanish. In years 10 and 11 pupils are able to study for both French and Spanish at GCSE level. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning a modern foreign language and standards of attainment are high. An increasing number of boys are studying modern foreign languages at GCSE and 'A' level. In 2000, 53% of the 169 entries for either GCSE French or Spanish achieved an A\*-C grade and, of these, 26% achieved an A\* or A grade. Standards are rising. The GCSE A\*-C pass rate target for modern foreign languages was exceeded by 11% in 2000. In 2000, all pupils entered for 'A' level examinations were successful and 52% of pupils obtained A or B grades. Inspection evidence confirms the high standards of attainment reached in lessons which are the result of excellent and very good teaching and very effective learning. Very good practice occurs in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and in the use of assessment. The use of computers and ICT to support teaching and learning is very well integrated into lessons and is very effective. The department has a multi-media suite with twenty four (24) networked computers and a range of interactive software. Pupils are able to access the Internet and word process. There is a dedicated Interactive Whiteboard room which is bookable for all staff in the school. Every modern foreign languages classroom has a TV, video, overhead projector, tape-recorder and networked computer, all of which are used effectively and have a very positive impact upon the quality of teaching and learning. Challenges remain in some aspects of target setting in respect of prediction of external examination grades although, notably, target setting for individual pupils is very effective. Teaching staff give very helpful support to teachers in the school's partnership primary schools in the teaching of French. The paired reading scheme whereby pupils in year 9 read in French to sixth form students is proving to be very beneficial to both groups.



43. The impact of the Language College is not confined to the school alone. Its influence is evident in the wider school and educational community. For example, intensive language study days are held which include teachers from secondary schools in the immediate area. Adult evening classes are held in languages at the school and teaching staff are also involved in teacher education and professional development initiatives.

44. Successful pupil exchanges with France and Spain are important features of the school's work.

45. The school is taking advantage of the opportunities offered by Language College status to enhance pupils' experience of the wider world through for example the Japanese Intern scheme, video-conferencing and international work experience.

**6. Very effective curricular and pastoral liaison with partnership primary schools facilitates continuity of education and aids transition from primary to secondary school.**

46. Excellent relationships with partnership primary schools have been built up over the years which have resulted in very good curricular and pastoral links. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education are well planned and very effective. They ensure continuity of education and smooth transition from the primary to the secondary phase of education.

47. Curricular links are particularly strong. Sixth form physical education students coach primary school pupils and help to run sports days in primary schools. Primary schools also use the sports facilities of the secondary school. Staff from the mathematics and English departments visit primary schools to observe how numeracy and literacy are taught. In both mathematics and physical education, talented pupils from year 6 spend a day in secondary school and are given 'challenges' thus providing staff with an insight into the abilities of these children.

48. Opportunities for liaison in the modern foreign languages faculty are varied and extremely valuable. Resources are shared and pupils in primary schools use the multi-media room and 'Whiteboard' ICT facility. Sixth form students who have made educational visits abroad talk to primary school pupils about their experiences and play games in French and Spanish with them. Secondary school staff contribute to primary school projects, talking to pupils about Christmas customs and food in France. In Spanish lessons, pupils from primary schools are taught how to use castanets, cook Spanish food and are taught dancing from Andalucia.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

### 1. The structure and timing of the school day

**Further develop the models for change to the structure and timing of the school day, as indicated in the school development plan's proposals, to enable teachers and pupils to work more effectively and meet the minimum recommended teaching time for pupils at key stages 3 and 4.**

49. The current teaching time per week of 23 hours and 45 minutes does not meet the minimum recommendations for either key stage 3 or key stage 4. The previous Ofsted inspection required the school to "review the timing and structure of the school day" as an issue for action. Following the recommendations of a working party convened to look at this issue, no significant changes were made.

50. Inspectors find that of the two aspects, the structure, rather than the length of the school day is of greater concern. The school day is organised as eight (8) periods of 35 minutes, although the majority of lessons last for two (2) periods and there are advantages and disadvantages to both single and double lessons. In some instances seventy minutes is too long to sustain pace and momentum, particularly for lower attaining groups. The most successful lessons seen however were 70 minutes long. They were well planned lessons in which teachers had time to teach through exposition or demonstration a main activity or task, consolidation of learning and often rehearse a homework task.

51. In many subjects, for example English, music, science, mathematics, technology and subjects where a substantial amount of practical work is required, a thirty five minute lesson is frequently unsatisfactory in that there is too little time to consolidate the learning and the pace is often rushed.

52. The senior management team is aware of the shortcomings of the current structure of the school day and it is an issue that is once again in the school development plan and the subject of a continuing dialogue.

53. Inspectors see benefits for the pupils' learning in having one hour lessons for all pupils in all subjects through implementing change. Preliminary modeling has been carried out on a school day which uses alternatives to the present timetable arrangement. With new dining arrangements in place, senior managers are of the view that such alternatives could be workable.

### 2. Provision for cross-curricular ICT.

**Improve provision for the use of ICT in all subject areas to give pupils greater access to computers and meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum.**

54. The school has made significant progress in the development of ICT since the previous inspection. The developments have resulted in first rate facilities for the teaching of modern foreign languages and good facilities for the teaching of computer studies/ICT, GNVQ subjects and business studies. Other subject areas have limited access to ICT because the specialist rooms are heavily used. The school now needs to develop a strategy to ensure good access, including networked access, in other key curriculum areas.

55. The school has appropriate arrangements in place for the development of staff expertise in ICT. There is a planned programme of staff training through the 'Learning Schools Programme' provided by an approved trainer under New Opportunities Funding.

56. The ICT Co-ordinator is assisted by technician support. The modern foreign languages department also has ICT technician support. As the use of ICT facilities for reporting and the recording of assessments grows, care should be taken to ensure that the potential administrative

demands do not detract from the ICT Co-ordinator's responsibilities in determining whether or not pupils' entitlement to ICT under the National Curriculum are being met.

57. There is currently no formal monitoring structure in place to assess the contribution that each subject area is making to pupils' ICT entitlement. The database system developed to record pupils' attainment in ICT should be implemented as soon as possible to assist monitoring strategies.

### **3. School self-evaluation**

#### **Development of the school's programme of self-evaluation to identify strengths in teaching and to disseminate good practice across the school.**

58. The headteacher and deputies have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in the school. They receive information from a range of sources including the analysis of examination and test results and the "MIC" model of self-evaluation (Maintain, Improve, Change). This model is used for pastoral, departmental and senior management self review and ultimately for individual self review; it informs development planning at all levels. This model of self evaluation and analysis has been welcomed by heads of departments. Pupils' work is also monitored through the link that each senior manager has to a group of subject departments. In addition senior management hold discussions with staff and students and make informal visits to classrooms.

59. Within the school self-evaluation programme, the formal monitoring of teaching is at an early stage of development. Monitoring is carried out within departments, but generally on an informal basis and the methodology used varies from department to department. There is however exemplary practice in this area provided by the mathematics and modern foreign languages departments. At present, what is missing from an otherwise good programme for school improvement is the means to identify strengths in teaching across the school which can be shared and areas where improvements are needed. There is no whole school approach to identifying and disseminating the best practices and as a result the school is not benefiting fully from improvements in the many aspects of the school's performance that follow from monitoring the quality of teaching.

### **4. Homework arrangements**

#### **Revision of the homework policy to ensure consistency and clarity in communicating expectations about homework to pupils and parents.**

60. The inspection team supports parents' concerns about homework arrangements. The school has a homework policy and during the inspection inspectors observed that appropriate homework was set. The recently introduced pupil planners are helping parents to understand the importance of homework in raising standards and developing responsible attitudes to work amongst pupils. The planners are an important means of communication and monitoring between the school, parents and pupils on a range of matters. While some parents are satisfied with the varied nature of homework, and that it encourages pupils to be investigative and to use a library, others expressed concern about the erratic nature of homework in respect of volume, timing, marking and the return of work. The written comments of many parents also referred to large and often unscheduled and time-consuming amounts of homework being set which disrupted family leisure time on some weekends. For a minority, insufficient homework was set. Discussions with pupils underlined some misunderstandings about homework arrangements, consistency in setting work and the balance and relationship between written homework and revision for tests and examinations. The school should now re-examine its homework policy to ensure clarity about consistency in setting homework, amounts, the nature of homework, communicating expectations about homework to pupils and parents and monitoring of homework so that a shared understanding can be established. Pupil planners provide a very good means by which homework arrangements can be improved.

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

The school's staff and governors are in a very strong position to remedy the few areas for improvement identified in the inspection. They should continue to focus on maintaining the high standards in the school, maintain the very good ethos and build upon much of the excellent work associated with the school's specialist Language College status. They should also:

**1. Further develop the models for change to the structure and timing of the school day, as indicated in the School Development Plan proposals, to enable teachers and pupils to work more effectively by:**

- moving forward with the models for organising the timetable as alternatives to the present arrangements
- meeting the recommended minimum amount of teaching time for pupils at key stages 3 and 4.
- removing problems associated with the eight-period day

**2. Improve provision for the use of ICT across the curriculum by:**

- accelerating plans to increase opportunities for pupils to use ICT in all subject areas
- giving pupils greater access to computers so that the requirements of the revised National Curriculum can be met
- introducing procedures to assess the contribution that each subject is making to pupils' ICT entitlement
- using the database system developed to record pupils' attainment in ICT and assist monitoring arrangements

**3. Further develop the school's programme of self-evaluation by:**

- agreeing and standardising, within a flexible framework, methodologies for the more formal and regular monitoring of teaching
- establishing a whole school approach to identifying strengths in teaching
- establishing systems whereby best practice can be widely disseminated across the school
- highlighting the benefits that follow from the effective monitoring of teaching

**4. Re-examine the homework arrangements in the school in order to achieve a better shared understanding between home and school about:**

- the school's homework policy.
- clarity and consistency in communicating principles and expectations about homework to parents and pupils.
- how homework is systematically monitored and evaluated by teachers and senior staff.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	21	45	25	nil	nil	nil

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	1063	175
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	115	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	28	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	158	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.7
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	2000	121	118	239

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	100	94	91
	Girls	103	87	81
	Total	203	181	172
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (74)	77 (77)	73 (67)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	65 (34)	49 (47)	34 (29)
	National	24 (28)	38 (38)	26 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	94	92
	Girls	86	88	81
	Total	165	182	173
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (82)	76 (83)	73 (68)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38 (43)	53 (53)	34 (29)
	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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	104	75	179

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	49	89	104
	Girls	52	69	72
	Total	101	158	176
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	57 (51)	88 (90)	98 (96)
	National	49 (46.6)	89 (91)	94 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43.5 (41)
	National	38.4 (38)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	98
	National	75.7

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2000	26	39	65

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	14.2	16.5	15.7 (18.5)	3.3	4.3	3.9 (4.7)
National	18.1	18.8	18.5	2.8	3.1	3.0

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	96
	National	83

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1225
Any other minority ethnic group	

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	71	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	351

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.5
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key stage 3	27.3
Key stage 4	19.6
Key stage 5	11.2

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	2769972
Total expenditure	2747345
Expenditure per pupil	2232
Balance brought forward from previous year	116463
Balance carried forward to next year	139090



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

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1238
Number of questionnaires returned	699

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34.0	57.0	7.0	2.0	
My child is making good progress in school.	40.0	55.0	3.0		3.0
Behaviour in the school is good.	33.0	58.0	4.0	2.0	4.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24.0	56.0	14.0	3.0	3.0
The teaching is good.	34.0	59.0	3.0	1.0	4.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19.0	47.0	27.0	4.0	4.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38.0	47.0	8.0	3.0	3.0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	19.0	47.0	22.0	5.0	7.0
The school works closely with parents.	59.0	39.0	1.0	1.0	
The school is well led and managed.	37.0	51.0	4.0	1.0	7.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39.0	53.0	4.0	1.0	3.0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26.0	42.0	14.0	3.0	15.0