

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Blackpool

LEA area: Blackpool

Unique reference number: 119778

Headteacher: S P Tierney

Reporting inspector: J S Morris
2415

Dates of inspection: 6-10 November 2000

Inspection number: 223857

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

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St Walburga's Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Chair of governors: B McVitte

Date of previous inspection: 26 February-1 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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B Findley 9003	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
C Richards 4992	Team inspector		How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
J Arnold 2408	Team inspector	Music	How well are pupils or students taught?
J Flisher 19414	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
M W Griffiths 4313	Team inspector	Mathematics Key Stage 4	
T Riddiough 31528	Team inspector	Science	
T Slack 2079	Team inspector	Design & technology	
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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P Bishop 19705	Team inspector	Geography	
C Campbell 3867	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
J Rowland 20593	Team inspector	Art	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	8
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	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	14
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	17
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Catholic High School is a popular 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. It has grown significantly since the previous inspection and now its roll is higher than average. The school has 1126 pupils, including 132 in the sixth form, with slightly more girls than boys. The school draws its pupils largely from the Catholic community within Blackpool and across the Fylde coast district. The majority of pupils come from eight contributory primary schools. Nineteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. Eight per cent are from ethnic minority backgrounds and 1.5% speak English as an additional language, which is slightly higher than in most schools nationally. Twenty-six per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs and 3.6% have statements of special educational needs. This is above the national average and this figure is unchanged since the last inspection. While the full ability range is represented throughout the 11-16 age range, over the past two years the ability of the intake of pupils has changed from generally below average to just above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Mary's Catholic High School is a sound and improving school with many strengths. Its caring ethos, very good relationships and generally good teaching ensure that needs are met for the majority of its pupils. St Mary's is popular with parents in the Catholic community due to its pupils' high levels of motivation, very good attitudes to school and good behaviour in lessons. The standards achieved by pupils at age 14 have improved and now are above the national average. In 1999, at GCSE, the proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more A*-C grades is above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving both 1 and 5 or more A*-G grades is well below average. The recently appointed head teacher has brought a renewed sense of purpose and vision. The enormous potential and capacity to improve that has been created now needs to be released. The school provides satisfactory value for money, but requires better strategic planning, financial management and monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that standards are raised for all and best value is obtained.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are above average at ages 14 and 16, for the higher grades at GCSE;
- Very good teaching in art and good teaching in several other subjects;
- Pupils' very good attitudes to school and good behaviour in lessons;
- Good relationships and high levels of motivation;
- The care, welfare, support and guidance for pupils' personal development;
- Extra-curricular activities;
- The vision for development now being given by the head teacher and key staff, including middle managers.

What could be improved

- Eliminating unsatisfactory teaching and increasing the amount of very good and excellent teaching;
- The proportion of pupils, largely boys, achieving 5+ A*-G and 1+ A*-G grades;
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum for less-able pupils;
- The collection, interpretation, communication and use of performance data at all levels;
- Assessment of pupils, reporting of their progress to parents and setting of targets for improvement;
- Strategic development, including monitoring and evaluation, implementing fully the new head teacher's vision for the school, financial management, departmental development planning and target setting.

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 uneven but satisfactory progress since the last inspection report in April 1996 despite a poorly structured development plan. The school continues to maintain a caring ethos, good standards and very good relationships. Many of the departments identified during the last inspection as promoting good standards and teaching continue to do so. Of the five key issues in the previous inspection report improvements to attendance have been most marked. Least progress has been made with the issue of grouping of pupils, especially in matching the curriculum to the needs of less-able pupils, particularly boys. Since the last inspection, governors have introduced procedures for departmental review, which now contribute significantly to the maintenance of standards and the improvement in the quality of learning and teaching and have done much to improve the quality of spiritual and moral development throughout the school. The new head teacher, appointed in September 2000, provides a fresh impetus for change. He has set appropriate and challenging expectations for strategic development which provides a secure foundation for continuing improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
End of Key Stage 3 tests	B	B	B	A
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	C
A-levels/AS-levels	C	D	B	

Key

very high A
well above *
average A
above average B
average C

below average D
well below E
average E
very low *

At the end of Key Stage 3 overall attainment is above average and well above average compared with similar schools. This trend has been sustained over the last three years. Pupils' attainment in English is above average. In mathematics and science, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. Compared with similar schools, attainment in the core subjects is well above average. It is well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science and St Mary's pupils make progress, which is broadly in line with improving trends nationally. The attainment of girls is significantly higher than that of boys. At GCSE, attainment is above the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more, higher grades, A*-C, is above the national average, but for all pass grades, A*-G, it is well below average, a trend over the past three years. The school's increasing average points scores per pupil is close to, but slightly below the trend nationally. In 1999 and the current year, attainment at GCSE fell short of the school's targets. These results were affected by pupils studying for the Certificate of Achievement which are not included in national statistics. For Post-16 students, attainment is in line with the national average. The difference between the average points score per student and the national average has narrowed since 1996. In lessons and in pupils' work the standards achieved in most subjects are broadly average or above average, with high standards achieved in art, business studies, mathematics, physical education (PE), and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils work hard, with enjoyment and a desire to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: the vast majority of pupils understands and observes the school's codes of behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Good: most pupils develop mature and sensible attitudes. Relationships with staff and other pupils are usually positive and supportive.
Attendance	Satisfactory: in line with the national average. Some pupils' punctuality at the start of the day is often unsatisfactory due to the late arrival of buses.

Pupils' attitudes to school and their work, their behaviour in classrooms and relationships are strengths of the school. The late arrival of school buses adversely affects punctuality at the start of the day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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 overall is good across almost all subjects, with 90% of teaching satisfactory or better and 19% of teaching very good or better. Teaching becomes progressively better as pupils move

through the school with the best and most consistent teaching in the sixth form. It is in art alone where teaching is almost always very good. The 10% of unsatisfactory teaching is largely in Year 8 and across the school within the teaching of science, English, music, and PSHE. Teaching is satisfactory in English and mathematics and in science it is satisfactory and often good. Across the curriculum, teachers expect pupils to do well. They have a good grasp of the subjects they teach and plan their lessons well. The main reasons for unsatisfactory teaching are a lack of clear learning objectives, the use of a limited range of teaching approaches dominated by teachers talking for too long and the use of overly controlled and directed activities. In such lessons, pupils are not suitably challenged, able to explore ideas, learn from each other or work independently. The school has increasingly effective arrangements for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Teachers pay appropriate attention to promoting good reading and writing habits and the teaching of number and information and communication technology (ICT) is good. Overall, teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, even though some less-able pupils and some students for whom English is an additional language do not have their needs satisfactorily met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory: provision for numeracy, extra-curricular activities and work-related learning is good. Opportunities for less-able pupils, particularly boys at Key Stage 4, are unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall: generally sound standards, but there is too much variation in the quality of provision between subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory: the language needs of some older pupils are not being met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: provision for spiritual and moral development is very good. The school has a strong ethos. Too few planned opportunities are provided for younger pupils to take responsibility.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: support and guidance is strength. Not enough is done to use assessment to support academic progress.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements except that pupils who do not take a modern foreign language or D&T in Year 10 are not formally disapplied. The PE curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is not broad enough and pupils aged 14 to 16 have insufficient ICT. Sixth form provision is good. Too many pupils, particularly boys have restricted opportunities at Key Stage 4 because they are almost always entered for Certificate of Achievement. The timetable allows specialist staff to teach most lessons, but the organisation of the day and the structure prevents some pupils from receiving their entitlement to the National Curriculum. The provision for care and welfare is a strength of the school and makes a positive contribution to pupils' achievement. Child protection procedures are effective and meet statutory requirements. Good arrangements exist for the promotion of good behaviour and monitoring of pupils' personal development, but academic monitoring and the setting of subject specific targets to help pupils know what they must do to improve require further development. Information to parents is broadly satisfactory and parents feel that they can approach teachers about their concerns with ease.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED?

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Satisfactory: the newly appointed head teacher is making effective progress towards creating the conditions for development and the next step in the school's evolution. He is fully supported by governors and key staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: generally governors receive appropriate information and use it satisfactorily, but they have not been rigorous enough in their scrutiny and challenge.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: the new head teacher has taken prompt and decisive action to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. This action needs to be extended, consolidated and made more systematic.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory: the school lacks a fully shared vision, an effective development plan and the cost-effective use of resources. Strategic and financial planning have been inadequate.

The head teacher provides a clear and unequivocal commitment to raising of standards and the development of the school's Catholic ethos. He has taken firm action to secure the conditions necessary to develop an appropriate vision for the school. Governors and senior managers realise the extent of change that now needs to be made, if the school is to raise standards further for all pupils. Most subjects are well managed. The school has suitably well-qualified staff, more than is necessary to meet its curriculum needs. It also has an effective team of support and clerical staff. The accommodation is now reaching its capacity. Resources for learning are adequate in most curriculum areas. The principles of best value have yet to be applied sufficiently rigorously.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils expect to work hard and achieve their best. • The vast majority of pupils likes school. • Ease of approach about questions or problems. • Help given to pupils to become mature and responsible. • Pupils make good progress. • Good teaching by enthusiastic teachers. • The care and welfare of pupils. • The provision and monitoring of homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about pupils' progress. • Arrangements for setting and grouping of pupils.

Parents express a very high level of confidence in the school. Parents feel that pupils make good progress and teaching, including homework, has a positive impact on their learning. Good access to staff ensures that any concerns about pupils' work or personal development are dealt with swiftly. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory because they do not report sufficiently on pupils'

progress or provide adequate targets for improving pupils' work. Arrangements for setting and grouping pupils result in some pupils having a reduced choice in the curriculum. The inspection findings confirm the views of parents.

OTHER INFORMATION

The governing body is responsible for drawing up an action plan within 40 days of receiving the inspection report, showing how the school will tackle the improvements needed. This action plan will be circulated to all parents at the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 The 1999 Key Stage 3 SATs results at St Mary's Catholic High School were above the national average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and broadly in line with the national average for science. These results remain similar to those observed at the time of the previous inspection. Compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment was well above average. The overall level of attainment has exceeded improvements nationally over the past three years. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels was above the national average in English and mathematics and close to the average in science. St. Mary's pupils make expected progress in science but about a terms' more progress in English and mathematics than do pupils nationally. The performance of girls generally exceeds that for boys by almost two terms.

2 Largely unchanged since the previous inspection in 1996, the percentage of pupils who attained five or more, higher grade GCSEs, A*-C grades in 1999, was above the national average and well above compared with similar schools. Compared with all schools and with similar schools, the percentage of pupils who attained both one and five or more pass grades, A*-G, was well below average, and the average points score per pupil was broadly in line with the national average. In terms of the value being added to pupils' learning, when results are compared to schools with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals the outcomes remain largely unchanged. The results are, however, significantly affected by high numbers of less-able pupils, particularly boys, studying for the Certificate of Achievement which are not included in national statistics. In consequence, attainment over the last three years shows fluctuating trends, which are above average for the higher grades at GCSE, but well below average for all pass grades and the improvement in pupils' average points scores has been below, but close to the national average. The results have not, therefore, kept pace with improvements nationally. Attainment of both boys and girls are close to the national average, a trend also sustained over the past three years.

3 At A-level and for GNVQ, attainment is broadly in line with the national average for the average points score per student. Over the past three years, the average points score has fluctuated, but is now above average. It has been close to the national average since 1996, part of an improving trend that has narrowed the gap between the school and national averages.

4 By the end of Key Stage 3 in SATs and in the work seen standards in English are above average and well above average compared with similar schools. In Key Stage 4, more-able and average pupils achieve high standards, but for less-able pupils the standards are unsatisfactory. GCSE results for English Language and Literature are above average, but the percentage of pupils entered for English Language is low compared with the national figure. The entry for English Literature is about the same as the national percentage. At A-level, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. Overall, girls' attainment is higher than that of boys. In mathematics, attainment at Key Stage 3 is above average, close to that for English and better than for science. At GCSE, improving results are now above the national average, but entry levels are low due to around 7% of pupils being entered for the Certificate of Achievement. Standards at A-level are broadly average, with fluctuations that reflect variations in students' abilities. Attainment in science SATs in 1999, at Key Stage 3, were generally above average and close to the average for higher grades. In 2000, results appear to be just above the national average. GCSE results are broadly average for higher grades, A*-C, but below average for all pass grades. A similar percentage of pupils in science to those in mathematics are entered for Certificate of Achievement, with a comparable adverse impact. At A-level, pass rates and average points scores for physics are above the national average. They are broadly in line for chemistry, but below national averages for

biology.

5 GCSE results in 1999 were above the national average in business studies, geography, history and PE where many pupils attained their highest grades. Overall in design and technology (D&T) and modern foreign languages (MFL) attainment at GCSE was also above average, although there was some variation between attainment in French and German and between technological subjects. In music, there were above average results for very small numbers of pupils. Data for 1999 in art suggests that attainment was broadly in line with the national average, but results for 2000 suggest that attainment is well above average. Across several subjects the attainment of girls is better than that for boys and in many subjects entering pupils for Certificate of Achievement places the percentage entry well below those expected nationally. At A-level, attainment in art, geography and history is above average, with many students achieving well for the higher grades. In history, consistently high standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.

6 In both 1999 and the current year, attainment at GCSE fell short of the school's statutory targets. Some time ago, before the appointment of the current head teacher, targets were set through to 2003. These do not take sufficient account of the full range of intake data on pupils and need to be revised. These targets should be set only within the national framework of expectations and maintain a level of aspiration for all pupils. With significant improvements in the attainment upon entry of pupils to the school, the current targets appear modest.

7 Observations of lessons and pupils' work during the inspection show that the standards achieved in Key Stages 3 and 4 are generally average. In business studies in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, attainment is well above average. Standards are often above average for a significant minority of pupils. However, in English, D&T, MFL, geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4 a significant proportion attains standards below average. The acquisition of basic skills and the development of pupils' writing in English and across the curriculum are good and have a significant impact on standards in many subjects. For example, in history, pupils use study skills effectively and cope well with expectations to write at length in complex and mature ways. In mathematics, pupils' number skills are good. Standards of attainment in science are broadly average, with practical skills and investigative work better developed at Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Compositional work in art is good because pupils' analytical and research skills are well developed. In D&T, most pupils handle tools, equipment and machinery with accuracy and skill. More-able pupils achieve good standards in research and design activities. Standards of singing in the choirs are good and for a small number of pupils who learn musical instruments.

8 Standards of literacy are good. Pupils' reading skills enable the vast majority to access the full curriculum and even less-able pupils can use inference and deduction to read beyond the literal. Writing skills are also good. Pupils use a range of styles to engage a reader's attention and many pupils show an increasing awareness of the effects they can achieve through their writing. Punctuation and spelling are reasonably accurate.

9 Pupils' skills in handling number are good. They cope well with the demands of work in other subjects and use these skills effectively in D&T, geography, science and music. Overall attainment in the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. The quality of its use is extremely variable and ranges from very good in history, geography and business studies to unsatisfactory in mathematics and music. It also varies from one key stage to another, with attainment at Key Stage 3 and the sixth form better than that achieved by pupils at Key Stage 4.

10 Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has until recently been below average. When they leave school at aged 16, the attainment of average and more-able pupils is above average. The

attainment of gifted and talented pupils is generally good. Due to a significant proportion of pupils being entered for Certificate of Achievement rather than GCSE, the attainment of less-able pupils is below average. Overall therefore, pupils tend to make sound progress, but there are unacceptable variations in outcomes for differing groups of pupils. The standards attained and progress made by pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. They make good progress in MFL because teachers help them to concentrate well. In music where teachers' planning does not take account of pupils' individual needs, attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. Standards are also unsatisfactory for some older pupils for whom English is an additional language whose needs are not satisfactorily met.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 The previous inspection report commented positively about pupils' attitudes and values and they remain very good. Pupils develop very good attitudes to work and enjoy their time in school. They participate with enthusiasm and interest in lessons, especially when expectations are clear and tasks are suitably challenging. During most lessons pupils are keen to learn, listen attentively, are well motivated and work at a good pace. Pupils take very good advantage of the broad range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and various clubs.

12 Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good because the vast majority of pupils understand and respond well to the school's code of conduct. Generally, they move around the narrow corridors of the former convent building with consideration for others. Pupils are polite and courteous, but a few have insufficient regard for their environment as seen in the amount of litter left around the grounds and school corridors at break times. In part, this is due to a lack of social areas for pupils and the inadequacy of the school's dining room facilities. Strict observance of criteria for the use of sanctions results in a very high level of fixed period exclusions but the numbers of permanent exclusions are very low.

13 The school has a good atmosphere. Relationships are good and pupils' personal development is very good. High levels of cooperation between pupils and with teachers create an environment in which pupils learn well. Few tensions are apparent between pupils and the small number of instances of bullying of younger pupils by older ones are dealt with promptly, firmly and effectively. As a result, most pupils develop a mature and sensible outlook during their time in school.

14 Pupils with special educational needs display positive attitudes to their work. Teachers generally provide a high level of support and encouragement to pupils who respond well, especially when work is well matched to their needs. In some instances, pupils are less enthusiastic when teachers' expectations of them are low and where work is not sufficiently challenging or well matched.

15 Pupils' attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and the overall level is now in line with the national average. Punctuality to afternoon sessions has also been dealt with effectively, but has been replaced by the unacceptable lateness of some pupils as a result of the unreliability of school buses. A number of other pupils arrive on foot up to ten minutes after the start of the school day having often abandoned the use of buses. Altogether, this makes for a slow and disrupted beginning to the timetable on most days.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16 Overall, teaching is good across almost all subjects for pupils of all ages. However,

teaching is unsatisfactory in a small number of areas. Teaching is generally good because teachers know their subjects well, plan and prepare their lessons carefully and generally teach energetically and with enthusiasm. Relationships with pupils are good. This motivates pupils to do well, helps them learn and leads to good progress by most pupils. Teaching gets progressively better as pupils move through the school. The best, most consistent teaching is in the sixth form, where just under half the lessons in Year 13 are very good. It is in art alone, where teaching is almost always very good, resulting in high standards in the subject.

17 In most lessons teachers have a very good grasp of the subjects, skills and topics they teach. In art, the teachers' own demonstration pieces give pupils high quality examples on which to model their own work. This sets an ambitious standard for them and results in real improvements. In English, teachers know texts inside out. For example in a Year 7 English lesson, where pupils are studying "Early Purges" by Seamus Heaney, the teacher's own knowledge and understanding of the poem enables pupils to discover the different layers of meaning and relate these to the poet's use of language and poetic devices. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson, the teacher's knowledge is such that she is able to break down high-level scientific concepts about chemical bonding into small steps, modelling each so that pupils of all abilities can understand. In science also, teachers' in-depth knowledge of examination requirements is used to sharpen pupils' performance and prepares them well.

18 In the vast majority of lessons, teachers manage pupils well so behaviour is good and learning takes place undisturbed. In many lessons, the choice of interesting activities results in the pupils concentrating for long periods of time. For example, in a geography lesson a teacher keeps pupils rapt attention for a full 30 minutes, stimulating many questions which ensure that pupils make rapid progress. In English, a teacher's good eye contact and practice of questioning individuals by name means that no pupil can afford to slack. In lessons where brisk starts are made, learning is effective because no time is allowed for irrelevant chatter. In music, the use of a sung prayer sets the right tone at the start of each lesson. Pupils respond well to good discipline. They say: *"It's good when they are strict but helpful"* and added about a teacher whom they respect: *"He just clicks his fingers and says come... and you do!"*

19 Teachers plan their lessons well. Many use the Internet to research new, up-to-date materials and this keeps the pupils well informed. In geography for example, stunning images and photographs are taken from the Internet and made into slides, which inspires pupils and gives them a better idea of the geographical features. In history at Key Stage 4, pupils are encouraged to reflect on what life is like for them so they can compare with real understanding the dissatisfaction present in pre-World War One Russia and the Tsarist government's inept responses. Lessons in D&T have a clear structure and collaborative planning with the support teacher ensures that materials are appropriate and activities engage pupils with special educational needs so they make good progress.

20 Homework, a weakness identified in the last inspection is now used to good effect in a number of ways. In art, sketchbooks are used to extend class activities and to encourage the pupils to build up a bank of their own ideas and resources. In French and German, homework is used effectively for learning vocabulary. In English, homework is used to extend the work done in class, for assessment purposes and also as a model for other pupils. In mathematics, homework is used regularly to consolidate the learning that has been done in class. In science, pupils are challenged to write word equations for each precipitate made in the class experiment on the preparation of insoluble salts. This tests out both their understanding and also their ability to explain it in words.

21 Generally, teachers expect pupils to do well. Where this is most evident, pupils are challenged, either by the rapid pace of the lesson, by the originality of the tasks or the demand placed on their imagination to think in different ways. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson, the teacher gives succinct instructions on how to develop the quality of their explanations and evaluations. In

English, one Year 12 group had to consider a text from the point of view of a director. This brings a new dimension to their thinking and consequent depth of understanding. Similarly, original thinking is required in a Year 7 history lesson in which pupils are asked to research in groups what the status of various people was in Roman life. This generates a high level of interest, particularly among the girls when finding out about "senators' wives".

22 Good teaching of basic skills helps pupils achieve well because teachers pay appropriate attention to promoting good reading and writing habits. Key words are specified in many subjects and different modes of writing are used as part of the teaching programme in history. For example, letter writing adds colour to the learning about Tsarist Russia, because pupils have to imagine what it was like to be an industrial worker at the time and write a letter of complaint to the Tsar. In Year 11, pupils are helped to construct a letter of thanks to their work experience placement by being given a model to help them and in English, less-able pupils are expected to write in full sentences to improve their answers. Number work is practised consistently and effectively in mathematics, in line with the numeracy strategy.

23 Despite all these strengths little teaching is excellent and some weaker aspects of teaching identified in the last inspection have not improved very much and other shortcomings have emerged. This is because teachers do not have a clear picture of what "excellent" teaching looks like. In Key Stage 3, too much of the teaching is unsatisfactory, particularly in Year 8 where nearly one in every four lessons is unsatisfactory or poor. This is also the case in music, science and PSHE. Because of these weaknesses, some pupils, particularly less-able, do not make as much progress as they should.

24 One of the main reasons for the unsatisfactory teaching is the narrow range of approaches used by teachers. Often teachers talk for long periods and too tightly control or dominate the lessons. Although this didactic teaching is effective in some lessons, with teachers conducting lessons energetically and often engaging the pupils' interest, such teaching fails to give pupils sufficient opportunities for working independently, exploring ideas together, discussing and learning from each other. In one PSHE lesson, the teacher missed an opportunity for pupils to come up with their own ideas for dealing with drugs. In music, the lack of discussion prevents pupils from articulating what they have learned so sometimes the teachers assume that pupils have understood and move on too quickly. Pupils told inspectors that they learn best when they are involved in the activities. When describing how teachers teach they said: "*Sometimes they go on for too long. It's best when teachers walk round and good when they get you in discussions.*" Pupils were also appreciative of activities that were fun: "*Hot seating is good in drama and games in maths.*" They were critical of copying: "*Copying doesn't mean you read it or learn it. If you don't take the books home, how can you learn it?*"

25 Another important reason why teaching is less successful in some lessons in most subjects is because learning objectives are not made clear, so pupils do not know how they are expected to make progress and improve their work. In some cases teachers confuse activities with learning. In other lessons, teachers do not share at the start, what pupils will know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson or remind pupils as the lesson progresses so progress is slow. In music, for example, plans outline what is to be sung, played or completed but not sufficiently what is to be learned or improved. Similarly in science, emphasis is often placed on what pupils have to do and not on what is to be learned so pupils "*cannot see the point*".

26 Across all subjects teachers make limited use of regular assessment. This remains a weakness since the last inspection and is, to some degree, linked with the lack of clarity teachers have about what good learning looks like. In several subjects, National Curriculum levels are not shared sufficiently with pupils. In English this has the effect of preventing pupils from recognising their own progress and when given a piece of writing to assess, they do not have the criteria against which to do so. Few examples of National Curriculum levels are found in science books

and only a few helpful comments are made by teachers in mathematics books so pupils are not helped to get an idea of how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. In music, pupils attempt a composition exercise but are not asked to play or sing their melodies to each other or to discuss which are most successful and why. Where teachers do use assessment to help determine what to do next it leads to rapid progress, for example, in art. However, attempts at assessment or pupil self-evaluation are left until too late in the lesson and are hurried and lacking in focus, for example, in PE. This is even more apparent in 35-minute periods in some subjects.

27 The teaching of pupils in some lower sets and of pupils with special educational needs in some classes is unsatisfactory because work set is not always sufficiently challenging. Sometimes, for example, in English pupils are given time-filling activities such as copying or drawing. In one English lesson the task was too complex and the instructions on the board were difficult to read so pupils struggled. In music, teachers do not plan different activities and approaches for less-able pupils and on occasion, in mathematics, activities are pitched “in the middle range of ability” with little challenge for more able pupils and no support for those with special educational needs. For some pupils for whom English is an additional language teaching is not suitably matched to pupils’ needs.

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

28 The curriculum meets statutory requirements except that pupils who do not take a modern foreign language and D&T in Year 10 are not formally disapplied, and pupils aged 14 to 16 have insufficient ICT. Otherwise, the broad elements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are covered, as are examination course programmes for pupils aged 14 to 18.

29 The balance between subjects is largely satisfactory, with the proportion of time for each subject in line with that found nationally. However, pupils are taught for 23 hours 20 minutes each week in all years, with some additional PSHE in tutor time. This is well below the recommended time particularly at Key Stage 4 where 25 hours are recommended. Consequently, some subjects do not have the time to teach the full curriculum, and attainment is lower and progress slower than would be expected with more time. This is the case in Music in Year 9, D&T at Key Stage 3, PE in Year 9, and ICT at Key Stage 4.

30 The organisation of the timetable allows specialist staff to teach most lessons, but the organisation of the school day is poor, and impedes learning and progress. Single lessons are too short for some activities, too much time is lost, particularly at the start of lessons, and several lessons and classes are inappropriately split.

31 Sixth form provision is good, and the school provides a realistic range of A-level and GNVQ courses. The sixth form curriculum is enhanced well by computer skills courses, key skills, numeracy courses and religious education. Careers education and guidance is provided through a good tutor time allocation. Sixth form provision is, however, subsidised by the deployment of resources at Key Stage 4. The planned review of sixth form provision is therefore entirely appropriate.

32 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In-class support and withdrawal is carefully planned to support pupils and to maintain entitlement in other subjects. The support option for pupils who cannot cope easily with a full programme of GCSE courses is found helpful by the pupils involved. However, many pupils, and particularly boys, with special educational needs have restricted opportunities at Key Stage 4 because they are in lower sets where they are too often entered for the Certificate of Achievement rather than for GCSE examinations.

33 The curriculum provision for developing basic skills of literacy is sound over the curriculum, and good in English. The school's literacy policy provides a basic framework for literacy development. Some areas are using literacy development strategies well, but the policy is inconsistently applied overall. Strategies for developing the basic skills of numeracy are good, particularly in mathematics, science, and D&T. The pupils all have the skills needed to cope with mathematical operations they are expected to do in other areas of the curriculum.

34 A very good range of extra-curricular activities contributes well to pupils' experience and the range of the curriculum, includes sport at competitive levels for boys and girls at all ages, regular musical and dramatic productions, local national and international visits and field work, and religious retreats. Pupils with special educational needs participate well in extra-curricular activities, and are given good support. Across the curriculum, teachers provide largely effective study support, but its organisation lacks a formal structure and strategy.

35 A good pastoral policy gives a clear intellectual and philosophical basis for the provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE), and a good proportion of curriculum time is provided for PSHE through tutor time, guidance, drama, RE and the "single regeneration budget" programme. Other subjects, particularly science, also make a good contribution, and the school draws well on support from the Diocese for teaching some aspects of PSHE. The taught curriculum has all the elements of an effective PSHE and pastoral curriculum. However, although there are several staff with specific responsibilities for elements of PSHE, no single person has an overview of the curriculum to ensure that the right things are taught in the right way at the right time. No guidance is provided for planning for effective learning skills or the development of teaching strategies through which the skills and experiences of PSHE are best taught and developed.

36 The work-related curriculum is generally good, and enables the majority of pupils to progress well to the next stages of education. There are effective links with local commerce and business, for example when Year 11 pupils are given mock careers interviews by local businessmen and women. The provision of work-related learning for pupils with special educational needs is, however, limited.

37 Links with the local community are satisfactory, and links with the local religious community are good. Links with feeder schools are positive and well regarded. The flow of information to and from the school is generally good, and very good arrangements for transfer are made. However, curriculum links with feeder schools are less secure. Some cooperative curriculum links have been made but these are only partially effective. For example, in English most teachers do not know what experiences pupils have had through the Key Stage 2 literacy strategy and are not building effectively on pupils' prior learning and experience.

38 Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The pastoral handbook provides a good policy, which is put into practice through RE, assemblies and worship, drama, and some elements of PSHE. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on questions of meaning and value as in a Year 7 assembly where pupils contemplate their closeness to God whilst listening to liturgical music. In an English lesson, pupils are able to reflect on death when studying a poem. However, opportunities for spiritual development in most subjects are rarely planned for in an explicit way, or exploited when they arise.

39 Provision for moral development is very good. The school's ethos is strong. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong, and are expected to behave in a moral way. Regular discussions about moral issues take place in the pastoral curriculum, as in a Year 9 PSHE lesson where issues of bullying were explored and challenged effectively. Teachers frequently praise individuals and groups for good moral behaviour, and actions that do not meet the standards expected are generally challenged.

40 Provision for social development is good. Many opportunities are given for groups of pupils to work together, particularly during extra-curricular activities. Pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to play an independent part in the life of the school, and take responsibilities. For example, they organise fund-raising and contribute to a wide range of charities, help at many social and other school events and functions, take part in assemblies, and act as prefects in Year 11. Some lessons contribute directly to social development, as in a Year 10 media studies lesson exploring the social impact of advertising. Other lessons give good practical opportunities for social development where pupils are expected and encouraged to work in groups and to learn social skills, as in PE and games. However, group work in most subjects is relatively rare, and not enough opportunities are given for pupils to play an active part in lessons. This is particularly so for younger pupils.

41 Provision for cultural development is good. The school aims and ethos value other cultures, and several subjects have chosen topics that reflect this aim. For example, in PSHE and RE, pupils are taught about religions in other cultures. Indian music is part of the music syllabus. In history, pupils study the black peoples of America. Though these experiences are good, they are not planned as part of a whole-school approach to cultural development, and many opportunities are not recognised or exploited. Pupils have access to a rich experience of other cultural events through, for example, visits to the theatre and art galleries, musical events and visits to other countries. Despite the positive aims of the school, not everybody understands fully the importance of preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural world and society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42 St. Mary's is a school that exhibits a high degree of care for its pupils. The provision for care and welfare is a strength of the school, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' achievement.

43 The school provides a safe environment for pupils. Arrangements and procedures for risk assessment are excellent. Any work to the buildings and grounds needed to eliminate hazards is done quickly where possible, or suitable steps taken to minimise risks. The school ensures that the safety of pupils is a high priority especially when pupils take part in visits or activities such as work experience. A good number of first-aiders have been trained in school. Child protection procedures are effective and meet legal requirements. The head is the designated child protection officer, and is fully aware of all procedures. All staff have received relevant training.

44 Attendance is promoted very well. Key staff undertake their duties effectively and, where pupils are absent without the school knowing, a call home is made quickly. The school has effective links with the Educational Welfare service and other agencies. Parents are involved well in keeping attendance as high as possible.

45 The arrangements for the promotion of good behaviour and for monitoring and assessing pupils' personal development are good. All those concerned have clear and effective accountabilities and responsibilities. The behaviour management policy is thorough, and well supported by a comprehensive network of staff with responsibilities for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. All staff and pupils know what the rules are, and what to expect if they are not kept. Expectations for good behaviour are high both in lessons and around school. The rigorous implementation of the policy has led to a high incidence of fixed-term exclusions, mainly for fighting among younger boys, but it has had the positive impact of immediately stopping the problem. Opportunities are taken in lessons to explore behaviour, particularly in tutor time, guidance lessons, RE and drama, but not enough to minimise the kinds of behaviours that lead to exclusion in the first place.

46 Procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils' special educational needs enable them to access appropriate support effectively. Learning support staff and subject teachers generally know pupils well. They are aware of pupils' social, emotional and physical needs, because the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator provides good information about individuals. Departments create their own Individual Education Plans (IEPs), but there is unacceptable variation in the extent to which they inform teachers' planning. For example, in science, although staff are aware of the content of IEPs they do not always use them in their day to day work. In mathematics, IEPs are used well to support planning for teaching and learning.

47 Systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress are sound. Pastoral staff have set up good systems for talking to pupils about their work and procedures for collecting information are effective. The National Records of Achievement are used effectively to collate information about progress over time. However, the information collected for pupil reviews is not always accurate or consistent because subject teachers do not follow the assessment policy closely enough. This does not allow tutors or year heads to be sure about the progress of any pupils.

48 Target setting in subjects and by form tutors has been developed, and is now part of the assessment and reporting policy. Long-term targets relating to possible GCSE success are set for each pupil in Year 7. These are helpful for predicting whole-school performance, but are largely unknown to pupils, and rarely used as a basis for planning and teaching by subject teachers. Targets in some subjects are too vague and not very effective in helping pupils to know exactly what they have to do to improve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 Parents and carers hold very positive views about what the school achieves for their children. They express considerable confidence in most areas of the school's work and value the caring ethos and good relationships highly. Significant strengths for parents are the expectations of hard work and that pupils will achieve their best. They also value the ease with which they can approach the school over questions or matters that cause them concern. The vast majority of parents are pleased with how much their children like school, the good teaching and the good progress made in lessons and the provision made for homework and its effective monitoring by teachers. Together, these factors contribute to a strongly held view that the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible adults. These views are confirmed by the inspection findings.

50 Parents expressed no major concerns but some did share unease about the quality of reports and their lack of detail about pupils' progress and the arrangements for grouping pupils into sets. Once again, these views are fully justified.

51 Links with parents are satisfactory overall. Parents receive good information prior to pupils starting at the school and the arrangements for induction ensure that most pupils settle quickly and effectively. Subsequently, parents receive frequent newsletters and a range of letters and information from year heads and tutors. The school provides appropriate specialist information about careers education, for options at Key Stage 4 and appropriately impartial advice for potential sixth formers. Homework diaries are well used as journals and provide a good means of communicating with parents. National Records of Achievement are of a good standard and effectively describe the work done by pupils. Parents of pupils with special educational needs receive sound information about the content of IEPs and all the required links with parents of pupils on the Code of Practice are fully met. Prompt and effective telephone conversations with secretarial staff and teachers avert many potential difficulties. The only significant weakness is the unsatisfactory quality of reports to parents. Although full in many respects, in far too many subjects, inadequate reference to pupils' progress in the National Curriculum is made. They

become, therefore, an unsatisfactory means of setting individual targets for improvement. Reports for sixth formers and in English and PE across the school are usually good and interim reports to parents are suitably followed up at parents' evening.

52 Parents' support for pupils' learning is generally sound. Despite difficulties with transport and the seasonal impact of the tourist trade, they ensure that pupils attend school. They are keen to support the school in its efforts to sustain good homework practices by regularly signing diaries. The school's drama and musical events are very well supported and the parent-teacher association is active. Parents are particularly keen to support pupils' spiritual development and actively encourage pupils to undertake retreats and to participate in residential visits to Castlerigg. Home-school commitments are securely underpinned by the implicit expectations of the school's aims.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53 Overall, the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The current head teacher took up his appointment in September 2000. He provides a clear and unequivocal commitment to raising standards, improving the quality of education for all pupils and a continuing development of the school's Catholic ethos. In the short time since his appointment, he has taken immediate and decisive action to secure the positive conditions necessary to renew the vision for the school and ensure its future development.

54 The newly-constituted senior management team brings together able deputy heads and senior teachers in a generally capable leadership team. Even so, some of its members lack senior management experience or currently carry out functions which do not always draw upon their strengths. The intention of the head teacher to restructure their roles is entirely appropriate. Senior managers are linked to designated departments and provide an important role in the monitoring of departmental performance through a process of review which is currently being strengthened to include monitoring teaching and learning.

55 A supportive governing body is dedicated to the success of the school. With senior managers, they share the new head teacher's vision and sense of purpose. They have a great pride in the school's achievements, especially the caring ethos, high quality of relationships, improving performance and its consolidation on the current site. They satisfactorily fulfil their statutory duties and significantly influenced some of the key improvements resulting from the previous inspection report. In particular, they took prompt action to improve attendance and spiritual and moral aspects of the curriculum. More recently, however, when they had highly complex matters of strategic and financial planning to deal with, their questioning of information presented to them lacked sufficient challenge. They are now fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development, appreciate the clarity and accuracy of information provided and are more resolute about decisions, that influence the direction in which the school is moving. Governors satisfactorily developed targets for appraising the work of the previous head teacher and his deputies but are aware that they must introduce further refinements to the process in future. They are regularly involved in training and some observe teaching in those parts of the school connected to their areas of responsibility.

56 Overall, the leadership and management of most departments is good and improving, with examples of effective practice in art, business studies, history, geography, mathematics and science. The leadership and management of careers education and work-related learning are good and prepare pupils well for their life beyond school. Where leadership and management are good, it is because of a shared commitment to high expectations which leads to effective team work. Pupils' attainment is above average and the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often good, with any weaknesses known about and dealt with. In these

departments, standards are improving and the quality of education is good.

57 The leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. An effective team, with high morale enhances the links with subject departments and the staff provided by the local education authority's support service. The monitoring of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is not sufficiently systematic and rigorous. Because IEPs are written in each subject area, gaining an overview of pupils' progress and the effective deployment of resources and teaching cannot be easily determined.

58 The pastoral team is well led and managed and makes a significant contribution to monitoring personal development and maintaining good behaviour and pupils' very good attitudes to work. The systems in place to support the care of pupils are effectively monitored and reviewed. Rightly, parents comment favourably on the high quality of liaison with primary schools, support for sixth formers and the rapid response by staff to issues or concerns about their own children.

59 Generally effective monitoring and evaluative procedures have been introduced since the last inspection. Based upon discussions to a common agenda, these termly dialogues satisfactorily evaluate examination and test performance, review progress with priorities and identify resource requirements and targets for development. Plans to strengthen the review process by enhancing and developing an existing programme of classroom observation are suitably in place and are linked to a sound policy for performance management.

60 Cognitive ability tests (CATs) and A-level information systems (ALIS) have been used to set targets for pupils' attainment, monitor pupils' progress and determine statutory targets. The information is used effectively to set long-term targets to predict whole-school attainment, but they are less effective for improving the learning of individual pupils and for evaluating the differences between subjects and trends over time. The information collected and analysed and the processes used to set statutory targets is distorted by inappropriate assumptions which adversely affect the accuracy of the target set. The ability of governors to monitor these targets is reduced because raw data and inaccurate and unnecessary information overwhelms them. As one of the new head teacher's first tasks he insisted on the use of performance information being brought into line with accepted standards.

61 Strategic planning and use of resources is unsatisfactory and in developing the school's management systems further, the principles of best value need to be applied more rigorously to the strategic planning and deployment of resources. The new head teacher provides a fresh and forward-looking vision for the strategic development of the school. When fully shared with staff, this will form the basis of an appropriate strategy for change. He has also taken prompt action to improve the poor quality development planning that currently exists throughout the school and financial management that has not looked sufficiently into future needs and costs. A new and sound structure for development planning now exists. It is essential that largely appropriate priorities for development which previously have not been managed effectively, within strict time budgets, with clear success criteria, costs specified and with effective monitoring and evaluative procedures are set within the framework of the new approach to development planning.

62 The school implemented almost immediately all of the recommendations from its last auditor's report and day to day financial control is secure. Procedures, however, have been made more difficult to implement by slippage in controlling the management of an agreed budget deficit. The school has suitably well qualified staff, more than is necessary to meet its curriculum needs and has a small, but effective team of support and clerical staff. Inefficiencies in managing expenditure on staffing represent the main cause of the school's budget deficit which now must be brought under stricter control.

63 Procedures for the induction of newly-qualified teachers and experienced teachers new to

the school are effective and support for initial teacher training is well managed. The continuous professional development of staff is related to the priorities for the whole school and departments. An increasing rigour has been brought to the provision of training and the evaluation of its cost and usefulness in raising standards. ICT is suitably used for administrative purposes. Many teachers use ICT well, including e-mail and the Internet and New Opportunities Fund training has been effectively provided. This improves the quality of teaching and learning resources and enhances the curriculum in, for example, business studies, geography, history and to a lesser extent modern foreign languages.

64 The accommodation that had greatly increased just before the last inspection is now reaching its capacity and rightly, plans for its more effective use or for further development are now to be considered. The pleasant surroundings of the St Joseph's building provide attractive and positive conditions for learning and generally, effective use is made of the space available. Teachers make even more effective use of the more difficult classroom conditions in the former convent building. Generally, pupils show respect for the buildings and move sensibly in heavily congested corridors between the buildings, but inadequate and poor quality dining room facilities impact adversely on the school's ethos, environment and conditions necessary to enhance pupils' social development. The new school library is well equipped and provides a good environment for learning. It is well used by pupils, but the sixth form library has many shortcomings, including too much out-dated stock. Resources for learning are adequate in most curriculum areas because the school has invested significant funds in the purchase of textbooks for pupils at Key Stage 4.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governing body should include the following key issues in its post-inspection action plan. They are listed in order of importance.

In order to build on progress made since the last inspection and continue to raise standards throughout the school, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

1. Raise standards for less-able pupils at Key Stage 4 by:

- improving the breadth and balance of the curriculum and providing courses leading to full accreditation (paragraphs 2, 4, 10, 28, 29, 32);
- providing sufficiently challenging targets and expectations for these less-able pupils (paragraphs 2, 6, 25, 27, 32, 48, 51, 60).

2. Reduce the amount of unsatisfactory teaching and increase the proportion of very good and excellent teaching by:

- developing and sharing a model and policy for effective learning and teaching (paragraphs 23, 25, 26, 35, 54, 59);
- setting clear and challenging objectives for what pupils need to do to improve (paragraphs 10, 25, 26, 27, 48, 50, 51);
- Improving the range of teaching strategies to increase pupils' involvement and participation in learning (paragraphs 23, 24, 32, 39, 40, 54).

3. Improve the quality of leadership and management by:

- establishing fully a shared vision for the school (paragraphs 53, 54, 55, 61, 64);
- providing effective development planning based upon secure performance and financial information (paragraphs 53, 54, 59, 60, 61, 62);
- implementing systematic and coherent processes for monitoring and evaluation that impact on the quality and standards of learning and teaching (paragraphs 6, 7, 27, 54, 55, 59);
- ensuring that statutory requirements for PE at Key Stages 3 and 4, ICT at Key Stage 4 and for reporting to parents are fully met (paragraphs 26, 28, 29, 32, 47, 51).

The following issues are of lesser importance, but should also be considered by the school:

- improving arrangements to ensure pupils' punctuality at the start of each day;
- reviewing the timetable and length of the school day.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

215

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	17	43	28	7	2	1

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	994	132
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	191	14

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	252	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	17

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	53

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	90.7
National comparative data	91

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
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	78	101	179

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	42	54	44
	Girls	81	75	64
	Total	123	129	108
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (76)	72 (66)	60 (57)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	40 (48)	45 (32)	22 (24)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	49	44	42
	Girls	74	62	62
	Total	123	106	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69	59	58
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	26	38	32
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	84	76	160

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	34	69	77
	Girls	46	66	69
	Total	80	135	146
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	50 (49.3)	84 (85.6)	91 (96)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36 (38.8)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	31	31	62

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	15.8	19.3	17.5	1.8	7.8	5.1 (3.7)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	9
White	1103
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	119	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)	72.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	379

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2933289
Total expenditure	2887357
Expenditure per pupil	2237
Balance brought forward from previous year	-131666

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.7
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Balance carried forward to next year	-85734
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.7
Key Stage 4	23.4

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1201
Number of questionnaires returned	450

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	51	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	49	2	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	49	4	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	57	9	2	2
The teaching is good.	37	56	1	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	50	13	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	41	3	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	53	11	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	43	45	1	0	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	53	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	43	7	2	12

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

ENGLISH

65 Until recently, pupils' attainment in English on entry to the school has been below what would normally be expected of eleven-year-old children. By the end of their first three years in school, pupils achieve standards above national expectations for 14-year-old pupils and well above the standards reached by pupils in similar schools. This good progress is demonstrated by pupils' performance in the national tests for 14-year-olds and reflected in the work seen during the inspection. The trend in the Key Stage 3 tests is rising, mirroring the national rise in standards. Girls generally attain higher standards than boys and the difference between them is greater than the national difference between girls and boys. Less-able pupils attain well and most pupils achieving below level 5, reach level 4 in the national tests.

66 At the age of 16, attainment is better than that seen both nationally and in similar schools but less-able pupils do not reach the standards that they should because the curriculum they follow is too narrow. In the 1999 GCSE examinations 70% of the pupils entered gained A* to C grades but only 83% of pupils were entered compared with 94% nationally. This means that of all the pupils in the year, 58% reached the expected standard compared with 53% of all pupils nationally. The proportion entered for English literature is broadly the same as the national figure. Sixty-six per cent of pupils achieved grades A* to C compared with 60% nationally. These standards were similarly reflected during the inspection. Average and less-able pupils make good progress and achieve high standards while some teachers do not expect less-able pupils to work hard and achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.

67 Pupils' standards of literacy are generally good. In Years 7 to 9 almost all pupils are confident and independent readers. They read fiction with interest and enjoyment. In a Year 7 reading lesson pupils read a range of texts including Jacqueline Wilson, J K Rowling, poetry and some adult titles. Pupils also read non-fiction for information and learning, selecting key features and relevant sections to support their views. In a Year 9 lesson pupils can compare one opinion of Blackpool expressed by Bill Bryson with images and impressions shown in a television travel programme. Less-able pupils and those with special educational needs are able to read with sound understanding, especially when their class teacher and support teacher give them strategies for working out unfamiliar words as in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were reading Roald Dahl's "Danny the Champion of the World". By the end of Year 11 most pupils have a range of reading skills and use inference and deduction to identify different layers of meaning in a text and to read and understand beyond the literal surface meaning. Year 11 pupils comparing "Jane Eyre" and "Cider with Rosie" can recognise and describe how the authors achieve their effects, referring to the text and selecting quotations to support the points they make.

68 Pupils' writing skills develop at an appropriate rate as they move through the school. During Years 7, 8 and 9 they learn to write in a wide range of styles, narrative, persuasive, informative and analytical, by studying the work of other writers to see what makes their writing effective. Teachers sometimes use pupils' writing as models for other pupils to show them what standards they can reach. Less-able pupils use a narrower range of styles but most are able to communicate their ideas clearly and many write at some length with a reasonable degree of accuracy. By the end of Year 11, more-able and average-attaining pupils achieve higher standards than many pupils of the same age. Their narrative writing uses sophisticated structures and varied and vivid vocabulary to engage and interest the reader. When writing to inform or persuade, pupils communicate clearly and structure their work in a logical and coherent manner. Some good work was seen during the inspection where pupils had compared different newspaper accounts of the same event with sharp and well-focused analysis, detecting and describing bias.

69 Pupils' listening skills are good throughout the school. They listen attentively both to the teacher and to other pupils and take other people's views into account in discussions. More-able and average-attaining pupils develop sound speaking skills as they move through the school because their teachers give them the opportunity to talk and discuss in pairs, small groups and full class situations. Many structure their talk clearly, use a wide range of vocabulary and interact effectively with others in discussions. These good skills were demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson about Seamus Heaney's poem "Early Purges". Pupils questioned two of their classmates who were taking the parts of the two characters in the poem about their actions and feelings. Their questions were perceptive and challenging and showed a very sophisticated understanding of a complex poem. Less-able pupils are not always given the same opportunities to consolidate their speaking skills. In some lessons they are expected to sit at separate tables to make the management of behaviour easier but this means that they cannot discuss their work or participate in group discussion. These activities are essential for pupils to make progress, to learn from each other and to develop social skills.

70 Attainment in the sixth form is broadly in line with the standards expected for A-level courses. In Year 13, students engage enthusiastically with a challenging text, Thomas Keneally's "The Playmaker", demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the novel's structure, themes and ironies.

71 A good foundation for the teaching of literacy skills is laid by the English department and the recently appointed literacy coordinator is working hard to raise awareness of the importance of extending this work throughout other subjects. Some good practice already exists. All Year 7 pupils have a personal dictionary, although these are not used consistently by all teachers. In Year 8 some subjects are experimenting with the use of frames for writing. The art department has guidance about developing literacy in its handbook. However, other than in English, few opportunities exist for pupils to plan, draft and rewrite their own work.

72 The school has a small number of pupils who are at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. Their rate of progress is unsatisfactory because they are given too few opportunities to learn and practise spoken English. Their teachers do not have the necessary skills and are poorly supported, especially for the teaching of pupils in Key Stage 4.

73 The positive attitudes that pupils display support and promote their standards of attainment in English. Pupils behave well, settle quickly to their work, concentrate and persevere when the work is difficult. They will take the initiative when given the opportunity and ask questions when they do not understand. These positive attitudes have meant that numbers wishing to continue their study of English in the sixth form are now rising.

74 The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Although in a significant majority of lessons teaching and learning is good, some unsatisfactory teaching in both Key Stage 3 and 4 leads to less-able pupils achieving too little. In addition, in many good lessons the same teacher-dominated methods are used and pupils are given too little responsibility for their own learning. The lessons where teaching is most effective in promoting good progress exhibit several common features. These lessons are well planned, taking pupils through new learning in small steps so that they consolidate and build on what has gone before. Literacy skills are developed effectively with an emphasis on more advanced reading and writing skills. This results in pupils being able to identify the elements that go to make up a writer's style and using that understanding to improve their own writing. In many lessons teaching is energetic and lively, demanding high standards through the texts used and the tasks set. Pupils rise to the challenge, learning from the teacher and from each other through debate, enquiry and intellectual curiosity. The few unsatisfactory lessons are mostly with classes of lower-ability pupils who are given work that is not well matched to their needs. It keeps them busy but does not help them improve their skills. Teaching in the sixth form is good. It

is invariably challenging and interactive and pupils are expected to take much of the responsibility for their own learning.

75 The eight full-time teachers of English are committed and hardworking. They work well together as a team and share responsibility under the sound leadership of the head of department. Together they have raised standards of attainment since the previous inspection, particularly in Key Stage 3. However, there is no rigorous monitoring of the department's work to ensure that all pupils receive the same quality of experience in the classroom. English teachers gather much useful information to aid them in monitoring pupils' progress but do not as yet use that information systematically to plan for curriculum development and further improvements in attainment. The setting arrangements in English, with boys under-represented in higher sets and over-represented in lower sets reinforces the difference in boys' and girls' attainment.

Drama

76 The drama department teaches drama to all pupils in Years 7 to 9. It also offers drama and media studies at GCSE and theatre studies at A-level. Attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 is good and better than national standards. These high standards are due to the quality of good teaching, the rigorous approach to planning the curriculum and to the effective assessment process.

77 Overall, the quality of teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed during the inspection. Lessons are well planned to build on previous work and move pupils on. Very good management of behaviour, a range of appropriate teaching methods, good use of group work when pupils support and learn from each other, and a sensitive use of self and peer group evaluation are features which promote pupils' good achievement. Pupils are given responsibility for their own learning, encouraged to take the initiative and offered experiences which take them beyond the everyday and the literal into realms of the imagination. Teachers' questions are rigorous and aimed at developing pupils' creativity. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and challenges pupils to make real intellectual and creative effort.

78 Leadership and management of the department are good. New schemes of work have been developed and is a recently adopted open mark book approach to assessing pupils' attainment and progress related to targets ensures continuity and progression.

79 Teachers achieve the high standards in drama despite the problems they face from matters beyond their control. Lessons of 35 minutes are too short to explore and develop ideas and presentations. The teaching of drama to pupils grouped by attainment rather than to mixed ability groups limits the experience for less-able pupils who do not receive the same creative and imaginative stimulus from each other as other groups might. The second space for drama has no blackout facility, no specialist lighting and is used as a classroom and cluttered with furniture. This means that it is difficult to create the atmosphere in which the best drama flourishes. However, this is a highly effective department providing good experiences for the pupils it teaches.

MATHEMATICS

80 Overall, attainment in mathematics is above national expectations at Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards in the sixth form are in line with the course expectations in all three elements of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In 1999 the National Curriculum test results at Key Stage 3 were above the national average and well above results in similar schools. A further improvement in Key Stage 3 took place in 2000 with the results again being above the national average. Attainment in the 1999 GCSE examinations was above the national average for A*-C grades. In 2000, 51.8% of pupils attained A*-C grades which is above the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining pass grades, A*-G grades is in line with the national average.

However the percentage of pupils attaining the highest grades A* and A and the entry figure of 88% of the cohort are well below national comparative figures. Some improvement in highest grades and passes occurred in the overall results for the year 2000. Ten pupils also obtained Certificates of Achievement. At Key Stage 3 girls consistently perform better than boys but at GCSE the gap is not discernible. Since the last inspection both Key Stage 3 and GCSE results have improved.

81 In 1999, 75% of sixth form students achieved A-level grades and this improved to 87% in 2000. The small numbers of pupils involved makes any comparison with national figures unreliable.

82 Pupils' number skills are good and enhance their learning in other subjects, particularly in D&T, geography and science. Pupils practise using mental methods frequently and can calculate accurately. Many can use calculators appropriately. They measure accurately and can interpret and use data with confidence in a range of subjects including D&T, geography, ICT and science. The department is successfully introducing the national numeracy strategy into its schemes of work and development of classroom practice.

83 In lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils' standards are above average. At Key Stage 3 pupils use number confidently, are increasingly competent in the use of algebraic skills and in aspects of shape and space. More-able pupils in Year 7 build on their prior learning to find a successful formula for the sum of the angles of a polygon. In Year 8 pupils can compare similar triangles to calculate the length of their sides and are confident in the application of different methods of calculation. However, pupils are less adept in using and applying mathematics. They lack confidence in using different strategies to solve problems or being able to explain what they have done and why. The lack of development in this aspect of the curriculum has consequences for all pupils and particularly for the most able pupils throughout the school. In part, this accounts for the fewer A* and A grades at GCSE.

84 In Key Stage 4 all pupils now follow the GCSE examination syllabus and successfully attain high standards in number and algebra, shape and space and handling data. More-able pupils are competent in solving problems related to standard deviation, solutions to complex algebraic equations and handling data to obtain information in a range of situations. Less-able pupils successfully use the unitary method of solving problems of proportion related to issues in everyday life. Throughout both key stages pupils' standards in the use of ICT in mathematics are below that expected for their ages and abilities.

85 Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress. In the recent past their success has been reflected in the Certificate of Achievement. At the present time these pupils are on target to attain a GCSE grade. Individual Education Plans are used effectively by teachers and support staff and where the plans focus upon what pupils need to do to improve their mathematics, gains in knowledge and understanding are good. In a lesson to discover a number pattern and the formula related to it, a set of less-able pupils successfully understood sequencing when using multi-link blocks. The support teaching in the lesson was very effective, because it helped the pupils to make progress by focusing attention on small steps in their learning.

86 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3 teaching is satisfactory with some that is good. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are good. Teachers have particular strengths in the depth and extent of their subject knowledge, the systematic teaching of number skills, the effective planning of activities for the lesson, the efficient management of lessons and the effective use of a limited range of resources to impact positively upon learning. Some teachers engage the pupils in their own learning quickly, have high expectations and use a range of strategies effectively for developing and checking out the knowledge and skills being acquired. Additionally in lessons and particularly where teaching is good or very good, homework is frequently set and well used to develop and extend learning.

However, too often, planning does not include clear enough learning objectives that are shared explicitly with pupils. Pupils are too rarely given the time and opportunity to offer and discuss initial answers and learn through questioning. Too many lessons are overly directed and controlled and at Key Stage 4 focus inappropriately on some specific parts of the examination syllabus. Marking and assessment within lessons is rarely evident and consequently pupils are often unclear as to what they need to do to improve. Too often more-able pupils are not challenged appropriately because teaching is pitched to the middle of a set group rather than planned to meet and extend the needs of different pupils of differing abilities within groups. However, assessment processes overall are developing and the marking of pupils' work at the end of task is a strength of the department. Reports to parents are variable in quality and too often do not tell parents and pupils what progress pupils are making and what they need to do to improve. Pupils generally produce work of a good quality and respond positively to homework tasks. The mathematics curriculum has breadth and balance and recently developed schemes of work for Key Stage 3 incorporate the National Curriculum 2000. Schemes of work provide a clear guidance and support to teachers. However, at present, the practice for using and applying mathematics development through using ICT and the use of graphical calculators remains unsatisfactory.

87 Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good and are strengths. Pupils make good responses in group work or as individuals but in some lessons they are overly directed and controlled. In a Year 9 group pupils use the opportunity through a piece of practical work to discuss and discover for themselves the approximate areas of a number of circles. They make good gains in developing mathematical ideas, personal relationships and communication skills.

88 Staff work hard to overcome the problems presented by the current timetable arrangement. Nevertheless, the impact of these difficulties affects quality and standards. The temporary arrangement related to teaching various sixth form groups after the end of the normal teaching day is unsatisfactory but plans are made to rectify the problem in 2001.

89 The leadership and direction given by the recently-appointed head of department are very good. A range of appropriate strategies for managing improvement is in place and the department is working hard to implement them. The head of department is leading change by example and has set the development of a consistent and exciting teaching and learning strategy across the department as the major priority. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching has begun and has clear links with the school's performance management framework and links with planning for professional development needs of staff. The plans to regularly discuss successful teaching strategies for particular topics or groups of pupils, including the use of assessment practices are entirely appropriate. The balance of experience across the department with half of its teaching being provided by committed but recently-trained teachers means that team work in developing effective teaching and learning is a priority. At present development planning, the monitoring and evaluation of the department's outcomes and the setting of targets for pupils are unsatisfactory.

90 Since the last inspection results at both Key Stage 3 and GCSE have improved as has the standard of work in lessons. The recently introduced strategy to raise attainment further is based firmly upon planning for greater inclusion of all pupils, their enjoyment of the subject and the raising of self-esteem for all.

SCIENCE

91 At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in science are broadly in line with the national average. In 1999, girls performed better than boys. By 2000, this trend had reversed with boys attaining higher results than girls at Key Stage 3. The trend in attainment is in line with the national average. Compared with similar schools the trend is above average. When Key Stage 3 results are

compared with pupils' prior attainment, the trend is also above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress though compared to English and mathematics in the school, science results are relatively lower.

92 At Key Stage 4, science results in 2000 for pupils achieving 5+ A*-C are in line with the national average and pupils achieved a reasonable spread of attainment across all grades. However overall, the percentage of pupils gaining one A*-G is just below the national average because a high proportion of pupils are entered for the Certificate of Achievement. Results at Key Stage 4 show an improving trend with a tailing off over the past two years, and with girls continuing to perform better than boys.

93 In the sixth form, overall attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Standards in physics are above the national average, in chemistry they are around the national average and in biology they are below the national average. Over the past four years the pass rate in all three subjects has slowly increased.

94 In lessons, attainment is broadly average and in line with nationally expected levels. In the majority of classes in Key Stages 3 and 4, the attainment of the most-able pupils is below that expected nationally. Some teachers have low expectations, particularly at Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in lessons. Discrepancies between test results and teacher assessments at Key Stage 3, are largely due to unreliable assessment procedures, analysis of data, and target setting processes. Pupils' practical skills are better developed in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, most pupils make satisfactory progress and improve their ability to conduct a scientific investigation, because this is clearly defined in the GCSE course. In Key Stage 3 the structure for teaching investigations is less apparent and pupils make less progress in this aspect.

95 Overall, teaching is generally satisfactory and often good or very good. However, a significant concentration of weak teaching exists in biology throughout the school, which means that the overall quality of teaching in biology is unsatisfactory. The teaching of science has many strengths. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm enables clear and accurate explanations to be given. They use scientific terms accurately and effectively develop pupils' scientific vocabulary. They use demonstrations effectively and provide pupils with clear instructions for their work. In a Year 12 chemistry lesson, the teacher explains the complex theory of ionic and covalent bonding through step-by-step modelling. This enables pupils of all abilities to understand these high level scientific concepts. Teachers are knowledgeable about requirements of GCSE and A level examinations and this knowledge is constantly used to enhance pupils' responses to examination questions. For example, in Year 11, pupils are advised on the criteria to make their own evaluations of their performance and know how they might improve. All teachers generally exercise good classroom management, have high expectations of behaviour and have good relationships with pupils. Teachers care about the pupils' success. Some teachers demand high standards of scientific explanations in responses to questions, written tasks and the requirements to predict and make evaluations. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson, the teacher gives clear and concise instructions to pupils on how to reach the higher levels of attainment through developing the quality of their explanation and evaluation of their investigation. Homework links directly to and further develops class work. In Year 11 chemistry homework, pupils are asked to write word equations for each precipitate made in a class experiment on the preparation of insoluble salts. In many lessons, however, teaching styles that favour the development of girls' attainment predominate and the strong emphasis on written work is not always helpful to less-able pupils. Too often pupils do not take responsibility for their learning. The match of teaching strategies to the needs of the pupils is achieved mainly by setting. For a minority of pupils, the setting arrangements do not match the learning needs. The department has not yet given enough consideration to approaches and tasks that more effectively match the needs of more-able and least-able pupils throughout the school, especially in biology. Teachers generally make insufficient

use of learning objectives to help pupils recognise what is to be learned and to summarise achievements at the end of lessons and this leads to a lack of focus in lessons. Written work is frequently and regularly marked but generally lacks guidance to pupils on how to improve.

96 Pupils have very positive attitudes to science and behave very well in lessons. The great majority are attentive to teachers' explanations and instructions and work carefully at a good pace. They concentrate well in lessons with good intent to complete tasks accurately, and are often quick to respond to questions. Almost all pupils enjoy practical work, which they carry out carefully and with due regard for their health and safety. They work well in pairs and small groups, discussing the work and helping each other.

97 The science curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is a broad and largely balanced curriculum except for a small number of the most-able pupils in some classes who have limited opportunities to extend their skills. The use of ICT to support science is currently limited. The department knows pupils' attainment in science but assessments lack clarity because teachers' judgements are not moderated by the use of National Curriculum levels. Therefore, little use is made of assessment to support pupils' learning by diagnosing weaknesses, providing support and targets for improvement.

98 The department's leadership and management are good and focus on the achievement of high standards. Under the guidance of an effective and hard working head of department, the department works well as a team of teachers and technicians to promote enjoyment of, and achievement in science. Although the department has a development plan it lacks detailed criteria for judging success and the identification of the steps that need to be taken to monitor and evaluate its progress.

99 Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and has moved forward in a number of other areas, for example, dealing with health and safety issues and the continuing development of schemes of work. Some key areas still require attention. Boys' attainment at Key Stage 4 and grouping arrangements to maximise attainment have not been successfully achieved.

ART

100 Overall, standards in art across the school are well above average. In Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils achieve above national expectations with many achieving well beyond this standard. Although the 1999 GCSE results are in line with national averages, overall standards in art in Key Stage 4 are well above national averages with the most recent results showing a high proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades. In the sixth form A-level results in 1999 are well above the national average.

101 Pupils' work shows progressive development in the key skills related to observational drawing and in the use of the visual elements of line, tone, texture, form, shape, colour, pattern and space. This leads to drawings and paintings of a very high standard in Key Stage 3, for example Year 9 "*Portraits*". In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form this firm foundation of skills together with the development of good research skills effectively supports pupils' and students compositional work and the creation of strong personal and often evocative images. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and students in the sixth form use the work of other artists and art from different cultures to guide their own work effectively. In Key Stage 3 this supports the development of accurate drawings and bold patterns. Year 8 pupils, for example, develop images based on traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art. In Key Stage 4 it results in strong images with very good drawing and painting skills evident and very good control over the visual elements. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form the

quality of 3D work is exceptional with very high levels of craft skills evident, matched to the development of strong creative images. However, in Key Stage 3 pupils' skills in developing ideas in 3D are unsophisticated because they have had few opportunities to work in this media area. Most pupils in all key stages are able to talk about their work with knowledge and understanding. However, in Key Stage 3 they do not always understand the criteria against which their work is assessed. In Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils' skills in the use of ICT as a graphic medium are unsatisfactory because opportunities to use it are limited.

102 The quality of teaching is always very good in Key Stage 3 and is occasionally excellent. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form teaching is almost always very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. This means they are able to challenge pupils effectively to develop high standards in all aspects of their work. Teachers plan well structured activities in art skilfully incorporating the use of the work of other artists and making good use of time targets, for example the Year 9 "*Life Events*" project. This supports the achievement of high standards by motivating pupils and enabling them to concentrate throughout the lesson. However, teachers' planning does not always make it clear what it is pupils should know, understand or be able to do by the end of a lesson. Teachers demonstrate an energetic and enthusiastic approach to teaching and a strong commitment to the subject. This means pupils are inspired and work hard to achieve the highest possible standards.

103 The positive relationships within art lessons are based on high expectations, the effective use of praise and the effective interaction with individual pupils. This supports the very good behaviour of pupils in art lessons. Pupils have very good attitudes to art. They are keen and interested and clearly enjoy the subject. Clear demonstrations, and explanations ensure that pupils understand what they have to do and as a result they settle quickly to their work and make good progress. Good use is made of regular assessment and questions during lessons that help pupils to understand how to improve their work. The effective management of the art rooms and resources means that pupils are able to work effectively and efficiently. Very good use is made of homework and sketch books in Key Stage 3 and study sheets in Key Stage 4 to reinforce and extend classroom activities. However, not all sketch books contain comments, which explain to pupils how they can improve their work. The very good displays in the school and the very good opportunities available for pupils to enhance their art experiences through clubs, visits to galleries and visits from artists all have a very positive impact on learning and on standards of attainment.

104 The department's leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides a clear vision for the department and leads by example with conviction, energy and commitment. The department has a positive ethos of teamwork and self-review with a clear focus on the achievement of high standards for all pupils. The development plan identifies an appropriate range of priorities but lacks a proper structure to be useful as a guide for the work of the department.

105 The strengths identified in the previous report have been maintained. Levels of attainment have improved and very good progress has been made on all but one of the areas for improvement identified. Structured opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a graphic medium are still limited. A key issue for the department is now to balance the need to provide breadth of experience in Key Stage 3 whilst still maintaining the current high standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106 Standards in Key Stage 3 and 4 are in line with national expectations. In 1999, the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A*-C was above the national average. These results were broadly in line with the grades achieved by the pupils in their other subjects. Results in the

food technology course were significantly above the national average with the other courses offered being below. For the pass grades A*-G, results were in line with the national average. The attainments of girls are significantly higher than those of the boys at grades A*-C. In 2000, overall results are lower than in 1999 and are now in line with the national averages. The food course results are again above the national average and the girls continue to achieve more of the higher grades than boys.

107 In the work seen during the inspection, attainment at the age of 14 is in line with the standards expected nationally. This represents good progress as pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are well below average. The majority of pupils have satisfactory making skills in a range of materials and their graphical skills are equally well developed and are at nationally expected levels. Subject knowledge, and the technical vocabulary which supports it, are also at nationally expected levels for average and more-able pupils. For example in a Year 9 food lesson the pupils were developing their knowledge and understanding of raising agents, and methods of handling the dough, which cause baked products to rise, comparing those used in industry with those used in the home. The girls' design skills are marginally better than those of the boys by the end of Key Stage 3 and at nationally expected levels. For the less-able pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills are better developed than other aspects of the subject.

108 Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with national averages. Making skills are at satisfactory levels in all material areas for boys and girls. Subject knowledge and understanding are at nationally expected levels for the majority of pupils as are their graphical skills. In a Year 11 group studying resistant materials, pupils were using an appropriate range of graphical techniques including two and three-dimensional drawings, with colour rendering and annotations, to communicate design ideas for their major project. As well as demonstrating good control of the media being used, the pupils also understood the importance of product specifications when developing their designs. Design skills are at nationally expected levels for all more-able pupils, boys and girls, and also the average-attaining girls. For less-able pupils and those with special educational needs, making skills continue to be better developed than other areas of the subject.

109 Throughout the school, pupils handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing accuracy and skill and work with due regard for safety and hygiene. Less-able pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress in relation to their prior attainment in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 4, especially in making. More-able pupils make better progress with design skills than the other pupils, undertaking research, analysing, drawing up specifications and evaluating with increasing depth and rigour. However, the rate of progress with the development of design skills, of average and less-able boys, falls particularly in Key Stage 4. Graphical communication skills develop well through both Key Stages 3 and 4, as pupils use a widening range of drawing and projection methods to model and record their design ideas. These aspects of D&T are developed by the deepening and broadening of pupils' knowledge and understanding and use of skills over time.

110 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is good. In Key Stage 4 it is satisfactory overall but the teaching on the food course is good. The teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding which ensures that their explanations, questioning and demonstrations extend pupils' thinking and develops their skills. In a significant majority of the lessons observed teachers used effective strategies and learning activities. For example in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson, the teacher organises the pupils into small groups each of which are to produce twenty identical products to be sold at Christmas for charity. The pupils are collaborating very effectively, planning the production sequence and sharing the work that has to be undertaken. They are challenged by this task which is managed, planned and resourced very effectively by their teacher. Teachers give good individual support to the pupils, often including accurate and informed

feedback, which makes an impression on these pupils and encourages them to value their efforts, and raises their level of motivation. In some lessons, teachers share the aims of the lesson with the pupils so they are aware of what they should achieve by the end but this is not a consistent practice. Rarely do teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson with the pupils, or set time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks, and this contributes to the loss of pace in some lessons. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Relationships between pupils are very good and they collaborate very effectively when given the opportunity to work together. Behaviour is very good. Routines are well established and classroom management and organisation are good.

111 The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but pupils do not have the opportunity to work with textiles which restricts the breadth of their experience in Key Stage 3. In addition the inclusion of ICT in the rotational course arrangements for Key Stage 3 affects the continuity of learning and impacts on the standards achieved. The assessment system should be simplified and linked to National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3 and GCSE grades in Key Stage 4, and all pupils be informed of their present level of work and have targets for improvement. Development planning lacks focus and precision and requires more emphasis on raising attainment, especially of boys. However, despite these weaknesses the head of department gives a good lead to his team and these deficiencies are related to whole-school policies and expectations rather than a lack of ability or leadership on his part. The department has very good accommodation and levels of equipment and these make a positive contribution to the standards of work achieved by the pupils. Since the last inspection the department has made satisfactory progress and the many minor criticisms made in the last inspection report have all been dealt with.

GEOGRAPHY

112 By the end of Key Stage 3 attainment for most pupils is in line with national expectations. At the start of Year 7 pupils consolidate their practice in a range of geographical skills, including using direction, scale and distance on maps and recognition of land form types. Demands upon pupils grow throughout the key stage as they are involved, through discussion, in consideration of a range of social and moral issues in topics such as settlement, environmental resources and population growth. They are regularly required to use up to date and challenging material obtained from the Internet. By the end of the key stage most pupils can describe and explain geographical patterns and many can research answers to environmental issues. The department has worked well to develop a good range of teaching materials for pupils of all abilities. Liaison with support teachers is good and pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to work to the level of their abilities.

113 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly in line with national averages. In 1999, GCSE results for higher grades A*-C were above the national average and the results for 2000 appear well above average. A number of pupils of lower ability gained grades in the Certificate of Achievement. In Key Stage 4 pupils learn how to write with greater precision and continue to deal with a range of challenging questions. Boys and girls attain similar standards in class. Pupils use ICT well in preparing their reports on field work undertaking in the Lake District and produce work of a good and sometimes very good standard.

114 A-level attainment exceeds national averages and students regularly attain the higher grades A or B in the examinations because of the complex materials used and opportunities for discussion and debate that set high levels of challenge.

115 Teaching is satisfactory or better in the vast majority of lessons and good or better in 40% of them. In the best lessons, objectives are shared with pupils, pace is brisk and pupils are actively engaged in discussion, which promotes effective learning. In a small number of lessons lack of

pace and failure to involve pupils slows progress. The head of department, appointed in September 1999, has led the department in a complete revision of the schemes of work. They are now of good quality and contain aims, key concepts and imaginative ideas for teaching strategies and structure of lessons. They do much to ensure consistency of practice across the department. Consistency is further promoted by a collection of high quality resources. The department uses video resources well and has developed excellent practice in the use of written and photographic material from the Internet – including striking satellite photography. Many very good opportunities exist for pupils to use ICT in their work. Lessons are well structured and teachers provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. The department fully completed the tasks set for it by the previous inspection report.

116 Pupils' work is well marked but teachers are concerned to develop their skills in this area. Some headway has already been made by writing a series of clear statements, which will act as benchmarks for assessing pupils' progress. Clearer ways are needed of sharing learning objectives with pupils to help involve in the assessment of their own work.

117 Leadership and management of the department are very good. The new head of department encouraged a move away from teaching being seen merely as the provision of knowledge, to teaching methods which challenge pupils to enquire and learn. All staff now have opportunities to teach across the whole range of pupils' abilities and ages. The head of department promotes effective planning and resource production as shared activities and provides staff with support, challenge and a good model of teaching in her own practice.

HISTORY

118 Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is good. Pupils' attainment is significantly above national expectations and reflects the capability of pupils, exhibited in classroom observation and written work, to exercise their historical skills of investigation and analysis in a very effective way and to be able to express their findings very lucidly in written form. Many pupils in the earlier years exhibit significant historical capability, which in Years 7 and 8 is not necessarily reflected in their written work. Many pupils start to study history with below-average literacy skills but the focused nature of the history teaching contributes to improve writing which matches their historical skills by the end of the key stage.

119 At GCSE higher grades and overall pass rates continue to be well above national expectations. In 2000 all those entered passed and 69% achieved a higher grade along with a further nine candidates securing Certificates of Achievement. This represented the lowest level of attainment for some years and was achieved by a small cohort of pupils by comparison with national averages. The evidence from classroom observation and from written work is that the former very high levels have been regained in the much larger cohorts in the present Years 10 and 11, with pupils exhibiting high quality deductive and discursive skills and a clear fluency in written responses.

120 Attainment at A-level has been consistently above national averages. The pass rate for higher grades has always been good, and frequently very good, and most students pass. The evidence from classroom observations and from written work is that this standard is being maintained. Sixth form students have strong analytical and essay writing skills.

121 Overall standards in history have been well above national averages since the last inspection and are a strength of the school. This has occurred because a focused teaching programme motivates pupils to succeed.

122 Teaching is generally good, sometimes very good, and always sound. Its strengths are the

emphasis on learning objectives to focus the understanding of young people; the depths of subject and methodological expertise; the challenge offered, and the encouragement provided, in a range of learning contexts; and the promotion of access for potentially less-able pupils. ICT is now used well. Marking is carried out regularly but approaches lack consistency.

123 The high levels of expectation and the encouraging and accessible curriculum provided mean that pupils make good progress in history because they enjoy their learning. The variety and relevance of their learning are important keys to this success. Pupils are encouraged to make connections with the contemporary news to inform their understanding of historical events such as the Russian Revolution and this reinforces understanding and ensures high levels of attentiveness throughout the school.

124 A carefully designed history curriculum builds from Year 7 to Year 13 and this is an improvement since the last inspection. It has strengths in skills and concept development, in the development of historical vocabulary and in the encouragement of fluency in oral and written work. The promotion of spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is at the heart of the history curriculum and is a particular strength. Since the last inspection a methodical approach to curriculum development has meant that the role of women in history now has a systematic and very effective focus. The study of the Black Peoples of America and of the Holocaust illustrate the commitment to the development of cultural and moral understanding. Awareness of religious diversity guides young people into an understanding that spirituality is a widely spread human characteristic.

125 Pupils' academic performance is carefully monitored to promote further progress but the department has not reacted sufficiently to the guidance of the previous inspection report to provide more helpful feedback to pupils. This relative weakness affects both immediate responses to pupils' work and also reporting to parents because there is insufficient target setting for the subject.

126 Departmental leadership is strong and based on a team approach. It is responsive to educational change and has a clear sense of strategic direction and this now needs to be matched by development planning which identifies very sharp targets with specific timelines and success criteria. This successful department is well placed to improve even further.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

127 As no results of teachers' assessments were submitted during the inspection, the overall attainment of pupils in the subject at the end of Key Stage 3 is difficult to ascertain but is likely to be below national expectations. Even so, in work seen during the inspection, standards of some, but not all, modules of work are in line with national averages. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils do not attempt GCSE in ICT nor is there any form of external accreditation in the subject and attainment is below average.

128 Pupils enter Year 7 with varying levels of competence. Some pupils have used computers for writing, doing mathematics tests, drawing pictures and playing games. Others have used the computers to search for information at both home and primary school. Pupils have worked on a wide range of machines. Pupils enjoy their experiences in ICT and most of them try hard in lessons. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress at the beginning of Year 7 when they soon become familiar with the type of computer available and how to log on to the network, retrieve, save and print their own work. Sometimes a few pupils forget passwords which slows down the logging process. Some pupils type quickly, others type slowly, but most can find the keys they need and the more-able pupils also use efficient short cuts. By the end of Year 9, pupils' work on word processing is mostly good. They can tailor the style and size and format of their writing to suit different audiences, for example, when making posters and travel

brochures. Most pupils can insert clip art pictures into their work and many can also cut and paste from the Internet to make work more interesting. Pupils draw their own pictures, but most of this is done early in the school and pupils' skills in creating art are not built up beyond Year 7. Database work is generally weak. Pupils have too few opportunities to create, add to or interrogate databases and most find them difficult to understand beyond simple searching and sorting. Spreadsheet work is sound. Pupils understand about cells and columns and can write and use simple formulae for calculations. Very little monitoring and control is done during the first three years in school, so work on these aspects is weak. In science, pupils sometimes do data logging experiments and in D&T they occasionally write sequences to make models move or light up. By the age of 14, pupils have a reasonable knowledge of the uses of computers and by whom, but most of them have little idea of the potential impact on society. On the whole, the pupils amass skills and knowledge satisfactorily, but too many of them lack real understanding.

129 From the start of Year 10, pupils all have skills-based lessons, where they work on word processing, creating and using databases and spreadsheets, multimedia presentations and searching and using information found on the Internet. As pupils have limited times for modules in the early years in school, they re-learn the basics at the start of most new ones. Most pupils make insufficient progress in Years 10 and 11. However, pupils present their work more carefully in these years, and generally do more work on projects, but they lack the more advanced skills which GCSE courses demand. They are unused to deciding for themselves which program to best use to present their findings and are relatively unskilled at solving complex problems or justifying their decisions. Their understanding of evaluating ICT methods is weak. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in ICT as they use a wide range of programs that are suited to their capabilities. These programs are sufficiently progressive to allow them to improve their work in words and numbers.

130 The attainment of students in the sixth form is broadly average. They can all use the available programs and equipment and produce work in line with the course expectations. In year 2001, a small group of students at this school will take the A/S level examination for the first time. Students who took GCSE courses in other schools have a big advantage over the ones who did not, as they gained the higher order skills required for external examinations. Most students understand their own capability and work hard to gain competence and reach the standards required. They all acquire sound basic skills and many of them make appropriate gains in the knowledge of ICT legislation, data protection and the potential of the Internet. Those students who take the key skills course in ICT use their previous knowledge sensibly and produce a good amount of work to demonstrate skills in using a range of programs.

131 Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. Most pupils enter the rooms cheerfully and appear keen to get to work. Nearly all prefer working at the computers to writing, but during introductions they listen well and are patient in waiting for instruction. Most pupils make good efforts to answer questions, and are polite in doing so, but only the more-able pupils, usually girls, ask questions about techniques, showing a desire for knowledge. Pupils enjoy watching demonstrations as they gain confidence from realising that many operations are straightforward. Behaviour in lessons is generally good. In some groups there are a few boisterous and immature boys but most pupils are amenable and do as they are asked. Pupils show respect for the teachers. They are careful with the computers and know not to access unsuitable information or tamper with programs or others' files. In general, pupils work alone and concentrate well, even when they encounter difficulties. In large classes, when they share the equipment, they do so without fuss. Pupils discuss what to do and share tasks fairly. Course booklets help pupils to become self-reliant as they can read and follow the instructions to move themselves on. Pupils in Year 8 are particularly good at experimenting and discovery. Older students have good work strategies and make decisions about the direction that their work will take. A few students in Year 12 have already fallen behind with course work, but in lessons, show a determination to catch up. Many pupils realise they lag behind pupils of similar age in other schools and willingly attend after-

school sessions to gain extra help.

132 The overall quality of teaching is good. Lessons are suitably matched to the ages and aptitudes of classes. Teachers wisely plan for different activities within lessons that are often overly long at 70 minutes duration to keep the interest of pupils. Teachers are knowledgeable and pass on accurate information and skills to the pupils by skilful demonstrations and good one-to-one help. Because behaviour is good, the teachers can concentrate on helping the pupils who struggle and allow others to get on with their work without interruptions. Teachers use equipment competently, especially computer-linked projectors, and ensure all pupils understand what they have to do before settling them to personal work. Pupils gain well from patient explanations and become confident in trying things for themselves. Teachers generally mark pupils' work at the end of a module, using the school system of marking, but in general, marking lacks detail of how a pupil can improve. Comments such as 'well tried' do not inform pupils of attainment. Many pupils have no idea about National Curriculum levels and how to gain standards higher than they do. In some lessons, homework complements the class work and in the better sessions, where pupils do research before the lesson, the homework is used as an effective tool to get pupils moving quickly to practical work. Support assistants give good help to the pupils who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy and as a result, they make at least satisfactory progress. Technician support is invaluable in many lessons as the equipment is kept in good working order and many pupils receive good practical help.

132 Pupils only have one seven-week module of formal ICT in each of the first three years in school. This is insufficient. It is intended that other departments should allow pupils to use their skills across the curriculum. Some departments, such as business studies, history and geography use the equipment well and often. Pupils use CD-ROMs and the Internet for research and they write up and present their findings using desktop publishing programs. Other departments, such as art, English and MFL accept the need to allow pupils' time to show their skills, but find access to the computer rooms difficult. In science and D&T, pupils occasionally use data logging and control equipment. Departments such as mathematics, science and music miss opportunities to extend pupils' computer skills.

133 Leadership is sound. The head of department, who is the only full-time specialist, is hard working and ably leads the willing team of part-time teachers. He has struggled in recent years to raise the status of the subject in the eyes of the parents and pupils, but has found it very difficult after the previous senior management team made a decision to drop GCSE. The curriculum is in place for pupils in Years 7 to 9. It is not in place for pupils in Years 10 and 11 as the modules are too narrowly concerned with words, pictures and numbers and omit control and monitoring, advanced database work, impact of information on society and extended use of peripherals. The department development plan is inadequate because it is mainly concerned with improving equipment and ensuring that teachers receive training. It is poorly set out and does not focus sufficiently on improving teaching and learning. Its time scale is confusing, as it is not chronological and no mechanism for monitoring and evaluating its implementation is included.

134 The department made a good response to the concerns made in the last inspection report. New modules of work, coupled with well-written course booklets, help to raise standards in Years 7 to 9 and the curriculum now complies with statutory requirements for these year groups. Basic skills are better, as are pupils' attitudes to the subject and the overall quality of teaching. The departmental documentation is much improved. However, pupils have less time for the subject throughout the school and they do not now take external examinations in year 11, although A/S level examinations are now offered to sixth form students.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

135 Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are broadly in line with national expectations as was the case at the time of the last inspection.

136 GCSE results in French in 2000 are above the national average although the number of entries is low by national standards. Results in German are below the national average. Girls achieve significantly better results than boys. The overall picture reflects that reported at the time of the last inspection.

137 In Key Stage 3 pupils' listening skills are generally well developed because pupils hear the foreign language spoken frequently in lessons by their teachers and by native speakers on cassette recordings. Many pupils can repeat words and phrases intelligibly from memory and more-able pupils can take part in brief exchanges spontaneously with good pronunciation. Few, however, can take the initiative in speaking or attempt longer utterances from memory. By the end of the key stage many pupils can produce short pieces of descriptive writing using linked sentences and some good examples of attractive written work using ICT. Within the limited range of texts they are expected to read, almost exclusively short extracts from course books or worksheets, pupils are able to extract basic information. However, there is no evidence of pupils reading longer passages of text.

138 In Key Stage 4 pupils who study the long GCSE courses in French or German continue to develop their language skills and by the end of the key stage more-able pupils can produce accurate, redrafted pieces of writing of good length on a range of topics. Of the significant number of pupils in Year 11 who do a short course in French or German, many lack motivation and interest and are reluctant to attempt to speak the foreign language.

139 Pupils generally display positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language. They show interest in their work and participate with enthusiasm and enjoyment in a variety of language activities. The number of pupils who choose to study a full GCSE course in Key Stage 4, however, is still low and well over half the number of pupils in year 10 have chosen to discontinue their study of French or German in Key Stage 4.

140 Most pupils are well behaved and cooperative in lessons and they establish good relationships between themselves and with their teachers. Most pupils display good levels of concentration and perseverance in lessons and work productively. A minority of pupils, mainly less-able, have difficulty in sustaining concentration in the 70 minute lessons and they become restless and talkative. Teachers, however, have little difficulty in getting their pupils back on task. In the sixth form, students display very positive attitudes to their A-level work. They are well motivated, mature, responsible students who respond well to intellectual challenge.

141 The quality of teaching is good overall and in all lessons is at least satisfactory. The quality of teaching has clearly improved since the time of the last inspection. All teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the language(s) they teach and this has a positive impact on the pupils' acquisition of knowledge. Teachers make confident, consistent use of the foreign language in the management of their lessons and this enables pupils to make good progress in developing listening and speaking skills. Lessons have clear objectives and good challenge which, particularly in respect of sixth form teaching, is an area of improvement since the last inspection.

142 Lessons are effectively planned and prepared within the context of the learning objectives in the schemes of work. In some lessons, however, there are insufficient opportunities for intensive oral practice with the aim of speaking confidently from memory with good pronunciation. Furthermore, in some lessons opportunities are missed for using attractive visual aids to introduce new material or consolidate knowledge. Teachers manage their pupils well so they concentrate and work productively.

143 The MFL curriculum is generally broad and balanced. In Key Stage 4, however, statutory requirements are currently not being met in respect of Year 10 pupils who are not disapplied from studying a modern foreign language. The department has effective procedures for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' attainment and progress and these are implemented consistently.

144 The department is managed by an experienced linguist who provides good leadership and direction, within a positive ethos of achieving high standards and an emphasis on team work and shared responsibility. The departmental development plan identifies appropriate targets but lacks reference to costings, monitoring procedures and success criteria. Currently no structured procedures are in place for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. Some teaching has to take place in dispersed, non-specialist classrooms and the department lacks the advantage of self-contained, suited accommodation. The department has maintained the strengths identified in the last inspection report and has made good progress in implementing improvements.

MUSIC

145 Standards of attainment in music overall are unsatisfactory. For the vast majority of pupils in Key Stage 3 attainment is below nationally expected levels and only for a small minority of higher-attaining, talented pupils is it in line or above them. This is partly because the work that is planned for pupils does not help them make sufficient progress from the standards they achieve at the end of Key Stage 2. Within this, most pupils attain reasonably well in singing, the majority reaching the nationally expected level 5 because of the diet of activities provided. By the time they reach Year 9 girls sing more confidently than boys. Most pupils can improvise short melodic and rhythmic phrases over a rhythmic accompaniment for example using the rhythm and notes of a raga. However, a significant number of pupils have below-average composing skills. These pupils do not describe and compare music confidently. They are not able to evaluate the music they hear in sufficient depth because they are not given enough opportunity to do so and are therefore not used to applying their knowledge and understanding to new music. The school's assessments of standards at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 are not accurate. Their figures for 2000 are lower but are still too high in view of standards of work seen during the inspection, which are below average compared with standards expected of the levels of attainment in the revised National Curriculum.

146 In Key Stage 4, the two candidates taking GCSE in 2000 both achieved high grades as did the A-level candidate. Standards seen in the current Year 10 group are in line with the standard expected at this early stage of the course. Pupils play and sing from a score with reasonable accuracy. They are less secure about technical vocabulary because teachers do not constantly insist on its use or keep checking pupils' recall. As yet their ideas for arranging are unsophisticated and mainly concentrate on changing dynamics and tempo. Little composition has been attempted as yet. Standards observed in Year 12 students are also in line with course related expectations at this stage.

147 Standards of behaviour in almost all lessons and around the music area are good. Nearly all pupils show respect to teachers and have responsible and cooperative attitudes. Nevertheless, the majority of pupils do not value music. They do not see its relevance to them and criticise the way it is taught. In the few lessons where pupils are not interested or motivated by the music they do, behaviour deteriorates.

148 Teaching in music is unsatisfactory because although it has strengths in many lessons and the majority of teaching is satisfactory or better, there is too much unsatisfactory teaching. About one in four lessons is unsatisfactory or occasionally poor. This is principally because teachers do not plan in enough detail either to establish exactly what learning is intended, to determine the most

effective approaches to help pupils learn or to meet the particular learning needs of the various groups of pupils.

149 Generally teachers have good control of their classes. The use of the sung, short antiphonal prayer *“Omnis spiritus”* at the start and finish of each lesson creates an atmosphere of prayer and spirituality. This means that pupils begin the lessons in the right frame of mind to learn. Teachers use positive encouragement generously. Teachers’ good technical skills on the piano help pupils to learn and then perform songs in two parts. Lessons are well organised. In one Year 8 lessons for example, the teacher organises an improvisation exercise so that all pupils can take part and learn from each other. In the same lesson, the teacher’s piano accompaniment provides a secure structure against which the pupils are, in turn, able to improvise short passages using the notes of the raga. By echoing the patterns the pupils produce, the teacher is able to help them play more expressively, making the performance more musical and inspiring the pupils who follow to be more confident and invent more adventurous rhythms.

150 Despite these strengths, there are important weaknesses. In many lessons teachers assume that pupils know basic concepts without checking out or illustrating them, so pupils carry out tasks without real understanding and therefore learning does not take place. Planning lacks clearly stated learning intentions about what pupils will know, understand and be able to do by the end of each lesson. This results in pupils not making the progress of which they are capable and lessons lacking focus so pupils are not helped to know what to do to improve. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to review what they have done, to practise, to consolidate their learning and to identify ways of improving their work, for example to listen to each other sing without the piano or listen to the melodies they have invented and evaluate them according to known criteria. Although planning is done for all lessons, it does not take sufficient account of pupils’ different needs and in particular for pupils with special educational needs, so the work or the learning activities are not always appropriate for pupils’ stage of learning or experience. Lessons lack variety in the teaching approach because teachers mostly dominate lessons. This limits the opportunities for pupils to talk about the music they hear and sing, express opinions, evaluate what they have done, make decisions about how to improve and develop their discrimination and aural awareness.

151 Curriculum provision is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 but is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In Year 9, pupils still only have 35 minutes of music per week, below the nationally recommended time, so pupils are not able to refine their music, work in depth or extend their learning. This seriously slows progress. The curriculum is not well balanced because singing takes up too great a proportion of the teaching time, composition is too frequently neglected for the majority of pupils and insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to use technology. Pupils commented that they: *“Enjoy working with the computer but it’s frustrating when we get interrupted, not everyone gets a go. We often don’t finish and our work is erased.”* Group work rarely takes place in lessons, however, good opportunities are provided for social development in the various musical extra-curricular groups that take place. This allows pupils from all the years to work together. The programme of concert going is good and opportunities are provided for pupils to experience music of different cultures. One group of pupils, for example, took part in a project on Gamelan. They were able to play Gamelan music, study the instruments and make their own traditional puppets. The programme of concert going is good.

152 Leadership and management of the music department are poor. All members of the department work hard and devote a lot of time to running bands, choirs and ensembles. They meet together to discuss department business but do not do this on a formal basis, systematically recording outcomes and decisions. No proper self-evaluation or monitoring takes place. Policies

are brief and state what should be in place but do not articulate how. The development plan is a list of intentions but does not have a structure that will ensure that improvements are made because it does not identify actions, those responsible, timescales, costs, professional development needs, how actions will be checked and how the success of their impact will be measured. The department does not yet have schemes of work that relate to the current National Curriculum and has not therefore an accurate view of expected standards. Neither does the department systematically keep recorded examples of all pupils' composing and performing work to enable assessment to be made and to have examples of work at different levels to use as examples for other pupils. Reports to parents do not fully comply with requirements. They clearly communicate what has been taught but do not always say how the pupil compares with National curriculum expectations, report on the actual progress the pupil has made in relation to National Curriculum levels or set clear targets for improvement.

153 Improvement since the last inspection is poor. At that time quality of learning in Key Stage 3 was variable; there were shortcomings in the teaching of Key Stage 3; the time allocation for Y9 was inadequate; few boys had instrumental tuition; there was a need for better practice rooms and music would have enhanced assemblies. All these weaknesses remain. Some improvement has been seen in the numbers of pupils following the GCSE course in Year 10 but this has been as a result of the efforts of the music staff rather than improved timetable organisation. Accommodation still has an adverse effect on attainment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

154 Standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with national averages. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results are above the national average for both the higher grades of A*-C and all pass grades (A*-G). Performance in practical work at both key stages shows aspects of precision, control and fluency and these provide the building blocks for future progress. At Key Stage 4 and A-level a high standard of written work shows that pupils have a pride in their work and performance standards in dance shows pupils' flair and imagination. Using music of a complex nature from Brazil, however, an opportunity to make cross-curricular links with other subjects was not taken. Pupils with special educational needs or medical problems are effectively supported by all staff enabling full participation in all aspects of lessons.

155 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is almost always satisfactory and is often good or very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations and manage pupils well. Effective demonstrations by teachers and clear explanations lead to high performances by the pupils. The brisk pace of lessons helps to motivate and engage pupils so that they make good progress. Good use is made of homework in the examination courses. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to evaluate their work or the time to examine what they do well and determine how their performance could be improved. Teachers do not always ensure that learning objectives are well matched to the activities offered.

156 Pupils enjoy coming to PE lessons. They are keen and enthusiastic about their work, cooperate well with each other and show mutual respect and courtesy. They engage quickly with tasks both in practical and written work and establish good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Their behaviour is usually good or very good. Occasionally, when they get overexcited they become rather boisterous and silly. The curriculum is broad at the beginning of Key Stage 3, but the limited time given to PE in Years 9,10 and 11 means that full entitlement to the National Curriculum programmes of study cannot be met. This is especially a concern in Year 9 when pupils' work needs to be assessed at the end of the key stage. The current time allocation does not meet the recommended time of two hours physical activity every week for all school pupils. The curriculum as a whole is limited to four out of the six areas of activity outlined in the new National Curriculum orders. No opportunities are given, at either key stage, to experience

swimming or outdoor and adventurous activity. At present the department does not have an accessible system for recording or tracking pupil assessments or attainments or for monitoring the coverage of the curriculum. Schemes of work have not been brought into line with the requirements of the new National Curriculum including the 8-point scale of assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. The school offers a wide range of out of school sport and activity. This is well supported by the pupils who are offered opportunities to represent the school in inter-school and other competitions. Many pupils have represented Blackpool and some have represented Lancashire and Great Britain. PE is well supported by the parents of pupils at the school and by other staff working in the school.

157 The PE department is led by a keen and enthusiastic practitioner who has a good vision for future development. The focus is on high standards and this is reflected in the results that pupils achieve. The development plan sets out a wide range of areas that need attention, however it does not include any success criteria or systems for monitoring or evaluating its implementation. Staff development needs are not assessed or planned in a systematic way and opportunities are not offered for staff in the wider aspects of PE. A number of whole-school issues relate to the department. Due to the high numbers of pupils timetabled for PE at any one time indoor space for a range of activities is restricted. This is especially true during periods of bad weather. Lessons often start late with fifteen minutes regularly lost from teaching time due to pupils arriving late from other lessons. The hard play areas, where surfaces have deteriorated badly, raise a number of health and safety issues. The surfaces are uneven and slippery and covered in loose gravel with grass growing through cracks and holes.

158 The department has successfully maintained the strengths identified in the previous report. However, insufficient progress has been made on two areas for action. These concern the lack of opportunities for pupils to appraise, evaluate and observe the work of other pupils and established sports figures and the inclusion in lessons of pupils who are unable to participate. The department has not analysed the reasons for the high levels of non-participation, much of which was observed during the inspection, and has not produced a plan to improve the inclusion of all pupils.