

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARK'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Hounslow

LEA area: Hounslow

Unique reference number:102543

Headteacher: David Sheath

Reporting inspector: Gulshan Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 12 - 14 September 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11-19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: 106 Bath Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Kerry Sullivan

Date of previous inspection: 21 November 1994

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mark's is a popular mixed comprehensive Catholic school and is currently oversubscribed. There are 1167 pupils on roll which makes this a larger than average sized secondary school. There are more boys than girls. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and are representative of a broadly comprehensive intake. About a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a similar proportion do not have English as a first language. These statistics are higher than national averages although very few pupils are beginners in English. Fewer pupils have special educational needs than is the case nationally. The proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Need is lower than the national average. Results of tests taken on entry and from national tests that pupils take in the final year of primary school indicate that attainment on entry is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Its success in enabling pupils to attain high standards of work and achieve impressive results in national tests and examinations can undoubtedly be put down to the very good quality of leadership and management at all levels, the high standard of teaching and the very effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress. These ensure that the high standards demanded of academic and personal development are met. The strong sense of community within the school nurtures and supports pupils' development, and helps them to achieve their best. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well – these are all major strengths which have a significant impact on standards

- High quality leadership and management make a significant contribution to the school's effectiveness
- Standards of attainment throughout the school are high
- A large proportion of the teaching seen was of a good standard and a third was of a very high standard
- The strong pastoral system is an important cornerstone of the school's educational provision. It has contributed much to the high standards of academic performance, and very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils
- There is a strong framework for the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The school's strategic use of resources is very good and underpinned by meticulous and shrewd planning

What could be improved – these are far from being significant weaknesses but are areas where there is room for improvement

- Cultural development, in particular the attention given to learning about different cultures, but also the contribution made by art and music to pupils' cultural development
- Planning different work for pupils of different abilities in lessons
- The allocation of time to art and music at Key Stage 3 and the length of lessons for practical subjects

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in improving itself since the previous inspection in 1994 and much of this has been due to the strong commitment of staff to improvement. Significant improvements have been made to the quality of the teaching and this is having a positive impact on the high standards being achieved. The standards attained, as indicated by examination results and reflected in the evidence of inspection, are now even better. High standards found at Key Stage 3 at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and the results at GCSE and A level have improved at a good rate. This is particularly so at A level as a result of the school's very good response to issues raised in the previous inspection report.

The school has tackled effectively most of the issues highlighted in the last report. For example, there has been considerable improvement in the provision and standards achieved in information and communication technology (ICT). Although the school has made good efforts to improve provision in art and music, these remain areas for further development. Documentary evidence indicates that the school has put in place robust arrangements to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in a daily act of collective worship. However, a shorter tutor period which became operational for the first time during the week of inspection, meant that not all sixth form tutors led their tutor group in worship. Hence the requirements for a daily act of collective worship were not seen to be entirely met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	B	N/a

Key

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

Overall, the school attains very good standards. The table above shows that the school reaches well above average standards at GCSE. A-level results have been improving at a good rate and were above average in 1999. The results of National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds are also well above average.

The recently published results for 2000 indicate that the overall results in National Curriculum tests have improved on the high achievements of 1999. A-level results have been maintained at similarly high standards to those achieved in 1999. Although the GCSE scores were lower in 2000 than in 1999, they were still significantly above the national averages of 1999. This was expected and is reflected in the lower targets set for 2000 which were largely met. A strength of the school overall is that pupils in all subjects attain standards that are at least in line with national averages and, in many subjects, the results are significantly above average. Standards attained in English, history and geography examinations have been consistently very high over the last few years. Levels of attainment seen during the inspection reflect the results of examinations and national tests and, throughout the school, pupils, including those

with special educational needs, achieve very well given their prior attainment. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve equally well as those of white UK heritage.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are enthusiastic and highly motivated. Their application to work in lessons is exceptional.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. This is reflected in the low level of exclusion. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is exemplary and it is only on rare occasions that a very small minority misbehave. The great majority of pupils display an uncommon level of maturity in their self-disciplined approach to school life.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are excellent. The school produces articulate youngsters who are sensitive to the needs of others, aware of the value of qualities such as friendship and kindness, and who willingly take responsibility for themselves and their own learning.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is above the national average. Sixth form pupils are now appropriately registered. This was an issue in the previous inspection report.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is consistently of good quality, with much that is very good. During the inspection, close to three quarters of teaching was of at least a good standard and about a third was very good. Teaching in mathematics and science was good and in English it was very good. There was little difference between the quality of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4, but the teaching in the sixth form was very good. Teachers in all subjects pay good attention to teaching the basic skills of numeracy and literacy as appropriate and, as a result, pupils' oracy skills are very strong. Writing skills are also unusually good for both girls and boys.

Key features of teaching that contribute to good learning and high standards include high expectations and very thorough preparation. As a result pupils are well challenged and resources and teaching materials help pupils to grasp new ideas. Teachers new to the school are making a good start. Overall, the school has addressed well the criticism in the previous inspection report of using a narrow range of teaching methods. However, there is still not enough attention paid to planning different work for pupils of differing capabilities in the same lesson and this is an area the school could usefully work on.

Overall, the good quality of teaching promotes good learning. Pupils have very well developed learning skills, and are able to work on their own. They use their own initiative when set tasks and on the whole have very well developed problems-solving skills. Specialist teaching for pupils with special needs is of high quality enabling them to make good progress. The very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as a second language receive high quality specialist support. Support from subject teachers is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school makes good curricular provision for pupils in all key stages. A good range of GCSE and A-level courses are on offer, as well as courses leading to alternative qualifications in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The curriculum is mainly well balanced and broad, but the curriculum time allocated to art and music is less than usually found in most schools. The 50-minute lessons are not always best suited to the needs of practical subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The special needs department makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Learning support assistants provide very good support to pupils in lessons and when they are withdrawn for specialist input. The area is very well led and managed and pupils' individual educational plans contain clear, measurable and specific targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides excellent opportunities for spiritual development, very good for moral and social and good for cultural. The school's Catholic ethos underwrites the powerful emphasis on commonly agreed values, but it is the opportunity for pupils to question and debate which enables them to gain a true appreciation of these. However, opportunities are missed to deepen pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school pays very good attention to pupils' welfare and guidance. Measures taken to assure the health and safety of pupils are meticulous and well documented. However, the school is hampered by deficiencies in its accommodation. The narrow stairs in the main building pose a hazard which the school is very zealous in minimizing, but which nonetheless is a concern.

Good use is now being made of computers in subjects across the curriculum. All subjects, with the exception of art, meet national requirements in the use of ICT. All other National Curriculum requirements are fully met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is an inspiration to staff. Others with responsibility in the school, including senior managers and heads of department, provide very good leadership in their own right and manage their areas so as to continuously enhance the quality of pupils' education. Delegation of responsibilities is very competently managed enabling middle managers to make a substantial contribution to the high standards achieved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed about the school and discharge their responsibilities very effectively. They provide the school with useful professional expertise, such as in finance, and are an effective sounding board for putting into practice school policies and procedures, as well as reviewing them. Governors are shrewd in their approach to financial management and have a clear oversight of the school's future development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good systems in place for keeping a close eye on the quality of the school's work, including the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring of pupils' progress is particularly good. Overall, the school is in a good position to institute the new requirements for performance management.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is making good progress in seeking to secure best value in its use of all its resources in order to provide the highest standards of education to all its pupils. The shortfalls in resources and technician time identified as key issues in the previous report have been fully resolved.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best • Staff are very willing and ready to give up their time to help pupils who need it or ask for it • The school is well led and managed • It enables pupils to become well-rounded individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • Information about pupils' progress • Close working relationships with parents • Activities after school

Inspection evidence strongly supports parents' positive views about the school. However, inspection findings do not support the concerns of some parents about activities after school or the school's relationships with parents. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including regular trips abroad and after-school and lunchtime clubs. The school does more than most in the extent to which it consults with parents and the ways in which it tries to establish good links with parents. However, there is some justification for concern about homework, which the school had already picked up through its consultation with parents and is taking appropriate action to address. Reports are thorough, and this view was reinforced by parents at their meeting with inspectors. Thus, some parents' concerns regarding insufficient information about their child's progress may reflect the organisation of parents' meetings, where staff are unable to see parents of all the pupils they teach, rather than a concern about the quality of reports. Even though a separate meeting is held for each year group, the large numbers of pupils in each year group means that parents and teachers have to be selective about who they see. The school willingly makes alternative arrangements for parents who request further meetings or information.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

High quality leadership and management make a significant contribution to the school's effectiveness

1. The quality of leadership and management throughout the school is very good. The headteacher has a clear vision and clear aims for the kind of school this should be. These are underpinned by the strong Catholic ethos of the school and are not only apparent to all staff but are positively subscribed to by all. The headteacher's caring approach wins support from staff, parents and pupils and he is an inspirational figure working in partnership and collaboration with his staff to achieve the high standards set for the work of the school. Middle managers, such as heads of department, feel that they are listened to and that their views carry weight in the overall decision-making processes of the school, and particularly in the deliberations at senior management meetings.
2. There is very good delegation of responsibilities. For example, there is a clear management structure which works well in practice and the management of delegated responsibilities is very effective. Senior staff are very competent leaders and managers in their own right. They are clear about their roles and carry them out with enthusiasm and skill and the support they provide to other staff is valued by them. There are high expectations of heads of department and heads of year, but they feel that they are given the room and the scope to develop and improve their areas further. However, they are also aware that they are accountable for maintaining and further improving standards.
3. A key feature of the leadership of the school is the extent to which it has secured the commitment of staff and pupils to its main aims. As a result, staff and pupils work hard and feel that they are part of a team. They know what they have to achieve and where they are going and, as a result, the school is not only providing a high quality education but is continuously seeking to improve.
4. The school's procedures for monitoring its performance are good. Through careful monitoring and evaluation of its work, the school is very effective in diagnosing its strengths and weaknesses. Staff, particularly senior managers, are pro-active in their response to potential opportunities for improvement or perceived weaknesses. Regular monitoring of teaching by senior staff and heads of department for the core subjects is effectively in place and is now being extended to include all heads of department. The school has produced a good policy and procedures to deal with the new requirements for performance management and is in a good position to implement it.
5. Governors carry out their responsibilities very effectively. They have developed a wide range of sub-committees which actively scrutinise the work of the school. This includes a sub-committee for special educational needs whose members meet the special needs co-ordinator on a regular basis. Governors are very well informed about school matters and many bring useful expertise from their own professional experience to their roles as governors. The school welcomes governors' interest in its work and day-to-day life, although work commitments make it difficult for many to visit the school during working hours. Some staff felt it would be beneficial for governors to do so in order to develop stronger links with staff other than senior managers and to obtain greater insight into the day-to-day running of the school. However, governors regularly invite

various members of staff with responsibilities to make presentations to them about their areas of work. Overall, governors meet their legal responsibilities well with the exception of providing for daily collective worship in some sixth form tutor groups.

6. The leadership and management of the school make a strong contribution to the success of the school.

Standards of attainment throughout the school are high

7. Pupils start school with above average attainment. However, the school builds further on this so that by the time they leave, the standards attained are well above those expected. Overall, pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are very good.
8. Pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds has been consistently well above that of pupils nationally over the last three to four years. Apart from a slight dip in science results in 1999, results in each of the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science have been far higher than in most schools nationally and than in similar types of schools between 1997 and 1999. The results for 2000 show further improvements on the results of 1999, particularly in science and mathematics.
9. The proportions of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C and A*-G have been consistently well above average between 1997 and 1999. The proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE at grades A*-G has not been as good in comparison to all schools or similar types of schools. However, almost all those entered obtain at least one GCSE. This is all the more remarkable as the school enters virtually all pupils who are attending at the time of registration for examinations. In the 1999 GCSE examination results, pupils' performance was exceptional when compared to the performance of pupils in similar types of schools. The GCSE results for 2000 were a little lower than those of 1999, but this was expected and is a reflection of a less able cohort. The school set lower targets for GCSE results for 2000 and they were met, except for the target of 99 per cent of pupils gaining at least one GCSE at grades A*-G. Overall, the school has made good improvements in its GCSE results since the previous inspection. GCSE results in English, geography and history are particularly strong.
10. A-level results have also improved well since the previous inspection. In 1999, results were above average and the results for 2000 are of a similar order. Boys' results particularly have improved at a good rate between 1999 and 2000.
11. Inspection evidence reflects the high standards indicated by examination results. Pupils have particularly strong speaking and listening skills that are used well not only in English, but across the curriculum, to support their learning. For example, pupils articulate their ideas very well in discussion. They listen to one another's views carefully so as to put forward cogent counter-arguments. In all subjects, pupils respond well to oral questioning and this helps to set up useful whole class discussions which further everyone's learning. Pupils are equally articulate and fluent in their written work. They write imaginatively and creatively when composing. The work of pupils in Key Stage 4 for example, is coherent, well paragraphed and ambitious in range and use of vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs also show good writing skills given their needs. Many are capable of producing extended pieces of writing, with sound use

of paragraphs, and communicate ideas effectively, even though spelling is often a relative weakness.

12. The majority of pupils throughout the school demonstrate very good skills in mental mathematics and in their ability to handle arithmetic problems. Overall, the high levels of numeracy they develop support them in other subjects such as science and geography. A notable feature of pupils' work is their very good capacity to tackle mathematical problems. The majority approach problems logically and thoughtfully and apply prior knowledge effectively in order to find a solution. Pupils learn fast and are eager to learn more. There is good depth to pupils' knowledge and understanding about key mathematical principles and theories, such as the rules that govern trigonometric functions. In science, pupils demonstrate strong knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas. They have very good practical skills.
13. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved enormously its provision for ICT and, as a result, pupils' skills in this area are in line with expectations and often above them. Good use is made of computers in most subjects. For instance, there are good examples in the geography work of Year 11 pupils where they used a range of programs such as spreadsheets and wordprocessing to produce well presented reports on the Norfolk broads. The science schemes of work identify a very good range of opportunities to use ICT as part of teaching and learning in science.

A large proportion of the teaching seen was of a good standard and a third was of a very high standard

14. From lessons observations, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons and good or better in 70 per cent. In about a third of lessons, the quality of teaching was very good. Teaching in mathematics and science was consistently good and in English it was very good. The quality of teaching in the sixth form was also very good.
15. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they put to good use in the well-structured questions they ask pupils and the coherent and clear expositions and explanations they provide about various aspects of the subjects they are teaching. High expectations of pupils encourage them to think hard and to try to find out information for themselves or solve problems on their own. A striking feature of pupils' learning is the extent to which they are able to use their own initiative and work by themselves. This level of independence is helped by the good attention paid to teaching pupils basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT. Thus, they are able to cope with the demands placed on them of tasks such as researching information.
16. In the majority of lessons, the thoroughness of preparation is a striking feature. For example, in many lessons teachers take great care in preparing useful and good quality materials for pupils to use. Learning objectives are clearly defined and shared with pupils in most lessons. Most teachers also summarise lessons well at the end, asking pupils what they think they have learnt and reinforcing, usually through effective questioning, key ideas and new knowledge that have been introduced.
17. The best lessons are characterised by enthusiastic teaching which engages pupils' interests and imaginations. In these lessons, teachers use a good variety of teaching methods and the lessons are very well paced. Questioning is dynamic and very coherently structured so that it not only makes pupils think but enables them to produce

new ideas or solve new problems. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, very well paced and focused questioning on 'what makes a good poem' elicited a huge variety of energetic and original ideas from the pupils. Rapidly fired questions and judicious exposition in a Year 11 mathematics lesson enabled pupils to gain key insights into how to solve trigonometric problems.

18. Management of pupils is very good in the vast majority of lessons. Many teachers demonstrated just how skilled they are when they established good rapport with pupils they had only recently met. Newly appointed teachers are settling in well and making good progress in establishing effective working relationships with pupils. They have begun delivering the syllabuses of work straight away so no time is being wasted in getting to know pupils.
19. The learning support staff for special educational needs provide very good help and guidance to pupils who have learning difficulties or other needs. There are very clear targets set for these pupils in their individual educational plans, and learning support assistants or teachers know exactly what to do to help them to meet their targets. Where pupils are provided with individual tuition, this is carefully tailored to meet the specific needs. A very good variety of strategies and methods, such as games and short exercises, are used when working on an individual basis to hold the pupil's interest and to move him/her on step by step to the next stage of learning.
20. Overall, the high quality of teaching makes a considerable contribution to pupils' learning and their on-going day-to-day progress. Good step-by-step development of key skills, knowledge and understanding from one lesson to the next results in substantial progress being made over time.

The strong pastoral system is a cornerstone of the school's educational provision which has contributed much to the high standards of academic performance, and very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils

21. A high priority is given to pastoral care and to providing pupils with support, both in terms of their personal development and academically. The school promotes a strong ethos of care and concern for all and all staff keep a look out for the welfare and well-being of its pupils. For example, there is a full-time school chaplain and a part-time counsellor is available for pupils should they require support or counselling. As a result of this care, pupils feel secure and comfortable in their environment and this gives them the confidence to try their best in all aspects of school life. There is very good provision for peer-group counselling as well.
22. The high expectations of behaviour demanded by all staff and clearly communicated to the pupils lead to very good behaviour. Pupils demonstrate an exceptional maturity in their conduct and their application to work. The very positive climate for learning encourages pupils to work hard and to concentrate well on their work. In lessons, they willingly co-operate with the teacher and one another and readily share ideas or engage in purposeful discussion and debate. Virtually all pupils are courteous and polite and demonstrate respect for others, including their peers. Firm discipline and well-staged systems of sanctions and rewards ensure that the school community operates as a harmonious entity. Bullying is largely absent because of the school's successful campaign against it, and there is no evidence of aggressive or racist behaviour. A few parents mentioned incidents of bullying, but also added that the school had dealt swiftly and effectively with the perpetrators.

23. The school is making good progress in meeting new requirements for social inclusion. A full-time key worker has been appointed, for example, to work closely with pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties to ensure that their needs are fully met. The special educational needs department pays very good attention to ensuring that pupils with special needs are given appropriate help and guidance. There is great sensitivity to the personal needs of these pupils as well. The department works towards boosting self-esteem and confidence in order to establish a good climate for learning. The special needs base is open to pupils at lunch times so that they can come and socialise or to get help with their schoolwork.
24. Pastoral staff play a key role in academic monitoring, that is careful monitoring and tracking of individual pupils' progress in order to ensure that all are performing to the highest standards possible. Those who show signs of underachievement are thus identified at an early stage and given help and support to raise the standard of their work. Through the use of academic monitoring days, pupils are actively involved in checking their own progress and in setting relevant targets for themselves. As a result, pupils are very aware of their own learning needs and what they need to do in order to improve. Use of data to track pupils' progress has been one of the keys to the school's academic success.
25. Overall, there is a good range of clear and well-written policies in the staff handbook to support the welfare and guidance of pupils. The health and safety policy is particularly detailed, offering very useful guidance as well as clear policy statements. School staff and governors are meticulous in their implementation of the policies for health and safety, but are rightly concerned about the risk posed by narrow stairwells in the main building. Procedures for child protection are thorough and effectively put into practice. However, guidance for staff in the handbook is too brief to be helpful to new or inexperienced members of staff. In addition, the school needs to consider going through the procedures with all staff at the start of each new academic year. Induction for new staff, which is to begin shortly, includes comprehensive training on child protection as well as other pastoral matters.

There is a strong framework for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

26. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. There are excellent opportunities for spiritual development, very good opportunities for moral and social and good opportunities for cultural development. The school's mission statement places strong emphasis on spirituality and values such as caring and respect and is translated very effectively into the day-to-day practice of the school. The school's Catholic ethos is woven into the fabric of school life and the principles and tenets of being a good Christian are lived out in practice by staff. This presents pupils with powerful role models to which they respond with equal commitment. Through the curriculum, pupils are presented with many opportunities to question and debate the nature of commonly held values and why these might be held dear by so many. Parents noted at the meeting with inspectors that religious education lessons in particular provided valuable forums for discussing spiritual, moral and social issues as well as learning about other major faiths in the world today. English and geography lessons also provide regular opportunities for discussion about moral issues. Assemblies are of very high quality and provide pupils with opportunities to look beyond the material world. Regular retreats and the availability of a chapel provide pupils with

further opportunities for reflection and contemplation. As a result of this very good provision, pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. They listen respectfully to others' views and empathise with those who might be having difficulties or whose lives are very different from their own. Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong and what constitutes injustice. There is a very good atmosphere within the school of tolerance and appreciation of others.

27. The strong sense of community within the school promotes social development very well. The quality of relationships is excellent, and the extent and range of collaboration in lessons, for example, are very good. The harmonious relationships between boys and girls working together in lessons are unusually good. Pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds mix unselfconsciously with one another both at work and play. A very good range of extra-curricular activities provides pupils with further opportunities to socialise with one another as well as to improve their knowledge and skills. For example, the physical education department offers a wide range of games and physical activities. The school inculcates a good sense of responsibility within pupils, responsibility for their own learning as well as responsibility for taking care of others. Older pupils set a good example for younger ones. Sixth formers, for instance, are involved in an anti-bullying campaign. They mentor younger pupils and sometimes help teachers in the classroom.
28. The school promotes very well the Catholic heritage of all pupils. In addition, there is a good range of visits to places of cultural interest. For example, there is a regular visit to France and Germany for pupils in Year 7 as well as work experience abroad for pupils in the sixth form.
29. Overall, the school's very good provision for the personal development of pupils serves to unite all to a common purpose and to create a powerful sense of community. This in turn enables pupils to feel that they belong and, as a result, they want to make their own contribution to school life. Thus, the school turns out confident, mature and articulate young people.

The school's strategic use of resources is very good and underpinned by meticulous and shrewd planning

30. In the previous inspection report, a number of issues were raised in relation to the provision and planning of resources. These included shortages in books, especially for the sixth form and in the provision and deployment of support staff, particularly technicians. In addition, the school's medium and long-term financial planning was criticised for not being matched to the school's educational priorities. These weaknesses have been effectively tackled so that there are now generally good resources across the school and there has been an appropriate increase in the level of technical support staff and support staff for special educational needs. The school's financial planning is now well aligned to its educational priorities. Overall, the school's strategic use of its resources is very good. There is very careful and diligent financial planning. This has enabled the school to make good improvements to its resource base and its accommodation since the previous inspection. Successful bids for further funds, such as the bid to become a technology college, have boosted the school's provision, especially in the area of ICT.
31. Governors are closely involved in the process of budget setting and in monitoring spending. The school is currently decreasing an overspend which arose partly from

planned expenditures to be funded from monies yet to be received through national grants and from the following year's budget. Financial planning for the current year shows that the deficit from last year is to be significantly reduced this year. The emergency replacement of the boiler also contributed to the overspend. This had posed a health and safety threat to staff and pupils, hence the decision to replace it using school funds was taken rather than to wait for funds from the local education authority. The local authority is fully informed about the overspend and the school reports that no concerns have been expressed from that quarter. In addition, there is a governors' fund which provides a useful cushion if needed.

32. The school's expenditure per pupil is close to average, probably a little on the low side given its location is London. The school is making good headway with adopting the principles of best value. It compares its standards with those of school's nationally and similar types of schools; in its spending it looks at competitive prices; there is wide consultation about its educational provision and through the proactive management the school constantly challenges itself to do better. Overall, the school's resources are used efficiently and effectively to provide the best that it can for its pupils. Given the high standards attained by pupils and the relatively low cost of educating them, the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Cultural development, in particular the attention given to learning about different cultures, but also the contribution made by art and music to pupils' cultural development

33. The overall provision for cultural development in the school is good. There are good opportunities for cultural visits including visits abroad. However, there is room for improvement, in particular in relation to the contributions made by art and music and the extent to which opportunities are provided for pupils to learn more about the cultural diversity representative of British society today.
34. Although music provides a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as a choir, pupils noted that musical and drama activities were not open to all and were limited to a select group. The music area is not particularly strong in the school. For example, relatively few pupils opt to study music at GCSE level. As a result, the contribution and impact of the music curriculum to the cultural life of the school is limited to a relatively small number of pupils. Whilst a larger proportion of pupils study art to GCSE, the numbers are still lower than the proportion nationally. A lack of art displays around the school detracts from the contribution that art can make to the cultural development of all pupils. Pupils also identified it as a weaker area.
35. The school welcomes pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and uses very effectively the commonality of the Catholic faith amongst the diverse groups as a way of uniting all into a whole school community. However, there is more limited awareness of and credit given to the differences between pupils which arise from the variety of ethnic backgrounds that they come from. Understanding of ethnic diversity is promoted well through religious education, and in English there are examples of the use of literature from different cultures. Overall, though, there is scope for the school to examine its curricular provision to enhance the opportunities for appreciating different cultures, particularly those that are represented within the school.

Planning different work for pupils of different abilities in lessons (differentiation)

36. The school has achieved academic success through its good teaching and through the detailed attention given to monitoring and promoting the learning of individual pupils. There is an opportunity to further improve on its current success by giving closer attention to pupils' individual needs in relation to the work that is provided for them. Pupils are placed in groups organised on the basis of prior attainment – in other words they are set by ability – in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. In other subjects, they are taught in mixed-ability groups and in the main these arrangements work well. Teachers pitch work at a reasonably challenging level for most pupils in a class and usually provide effective support and help for lower attainers. Higher attainers are given extension work if they need it. Those with special needs receive additional help, often through the use of learning support assistants, so their needs are usually well met. However, not enough use is made of developing different work for pupils of different ability in the same class, and this is as much an issue in subjects where pupils are set by ability as in mixed-ability classes. The lack of differentiation tends to impact most on the ablest and/or those who are low attainers, but not those with special needs because they are very well supported by the special needs department. These pupils are sometimes not working at their best because tasks are that little bit too easy if they are very bright pupils or a little too hard if they are of low ability. For example, in mathematics lessons, the ablest pupils are usually required to complete the same work as the rest of the class even when quite often they could quite easily skip some of the more routine exercises because these are relatively easy for them, and there are similar examples in other subjects. There is a tendency to be a little over-dependent on the textbook in mathematics.
37. The school makes extra-curricular provision for able pupils through the gifted and talented initiative. This enables pupils to widen their horizons and to engage in useful learning about areas such as philosophy. Following the last inspection, the school produced a framework in schemes of work for identifying different levels of work for pupils of different levels of ability. However, the extent to which this framework has been adopted and is being used by teachers is variable.
38. There are only a small number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English, although there are a relatively high proportion in total with English as an additional language. The beginners receive good support from the specialist support teacher, but the extent to which other staff are aware of the needs of bi-lingual pupils and provide support and materials to help them is too variable.
39. Overall, further work on differentiation provides an opportunity for the school to fine tune its provision and tailor it even more sharply to the needs of its pupils, and hence to continue to raise achievement. Overall, shortcomings in differentiation mean that at present not all pupils make as rapid progress in their learning as they are capable of.

The allocation of time to art and music at Key Stage 3 and the length of lessons for practical subjects

40. The school has worked hard to improve its timetabling since the previous inspection. It recently moved to a six period day, with periods being of 50 minutes duration. However, in the process, the already low time allocated to music and art at Key Stage 3 was reduced from one 55 minute period to one 50 minute period. This is further eroded when the rolling period for personal and social education coincides with an art or music

lesson at Key Stage 3. Overall, less time is spent on music and art in Key Stage 3 than in schools nationally. Music and art are held in low esteem by pupils who identified low curricular time for music and art as one of the reasons for this. They also expressed some concerns about the quality of teaching in these areas. In addition, a few parents identified music provision as a weaker area. The school has tried to improve the overall curricular provision for art since the previous inspection, but there has not been enough improvement and a number of issues identified in the previous report persist. In addition, the art area does not fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum to deliver ICT.

41. The length of periods also impacts on practical subjects, where a double period is often too long and a single period is too short and can result in lessons being a bit rushed. On the whole teachers manage the time well, and often very well, but it does place them under some pressure. Single periods in physical education are a particular problem since a few minutes are lost at the start and the end of each lesson so that pupils can change clothes.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

42. In order to build on its many strengths and to improve further the educational provision of the school, the headteacher, senior staff and governors should:

1. **Enhance the cultural provision of the school by:**

- devising and implementing a policy for cultural development;
- raising awareness and making use of the curricular opportunities for developing pupils' understanding of cultural diversity;
- increasing the contribution of art and music to the cultural life of the school.

(Paragraphs: 33 - 35)

2. **Promote effectively the use of differentiation in teaching by:**

- developing all teachers' understanding of how to differentiate work effectively;
- ensuring that all departments have included guidance and information for teachers on how to differentiate work in their areas;
- ensuring that all departments produce work on similar topics but at different levels of difficulty which could be used with the same class;
- raising teachers' awareness of methods for supporting bi-lingual pupils.

(Paragraphs: 36 - 39)

3. **Improve curricular provision by:**

- ensuring there is sufficient time for teaching art and music at Key Stage 3;
- tackling the remaining issues in art from the previous inspection, including the use of computers;
- considering how timetabling could be more effective with respect to practical subjects.

(Paragraphs: 40 - 41)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	31	38	27	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	942	225
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	96	9

Special educational needs

	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	99	1

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	275

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000 (1999)	97 (103)	93 (87)	190 (190)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	71 (87)	81 (82)	77 (72)
	Girls	82 (74)	77 (69)	69 (58)
	Total	153 (161)	158 (151)	146 (130)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (85)	83 (79)	77 (68)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (50)	58 (55)	48 (30)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89 (89)	76 (71)	73 (71)
	Girls	91 (75)	74 (67)	70 (59)
	Total	180 (164)	150 (138)	143 (130)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	95 (86)	79 (73)	75 (68)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	61(56)	36 (41)	33 (19)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000 (1999)	104 (94)	84 (87)	188 (181)

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	62 (65)	98 (93)	99 (93)
	Girls	60 (66)	81 (84)	82 (84)
	Total	122 (131)	179 (177)	181 (177)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (72)	95.2 (98)	96.3 (98)
	National	(46.6)	(90.9)	(95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	47 (50)
	National	(38)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2000 (1999)	39 (28)	39 (37)	78 (65)

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A- levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	16.4 (14.5)	17.6 (19.7)	17.0 (17.3)	10.0 (n/a)	8.0 (n/a)	9.0 (2.8)
National	(17.7)	(18.1)	(17.9)	(2.7)	(2.8)	(2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	16
Black – African heritage	36
Black – other	10
Indian	119
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	8
White	861
Any other minority ethnic group	111

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	1
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	10	0
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)	68.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y13

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	333

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	23

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3148779
Total expenditure	3080109
Expenditure per pupil	2686
Balance brought forward from previous year	-254866
Balance carried forward to next year	-186196

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1167
Number of questionnaires returned	164

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	36	4	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	56	37	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	48	5	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	49	10	4	1
The teaching is good.	45	46	5	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	46	10	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	37	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	21	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	40	44	11	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	62	34	2	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	43	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	46	10	3	7