

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NORTHFIELD SCHOOL**

Thames Road, Billingham, TS22 5EG

LEA area: Stockton on Tees

Unique reference number: 111731

Headteacher: Mr D Youldon

Reporting inspector: Mr T Wheatley  
10013

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> November

Inspection number: 223881

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Thames Road  
Billingham

Postcode: TS22 5EG

Telephone number: 01642 557373

Fax number: 01642 360 392

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr D Stringer

Date of previous inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Ted Wheatley	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Dawn Lloyd	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
David Toft	Team inspector	English	
Henry Moreton	Team Inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs	
Phil Weston	Team inspector	Science	
Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Information technology	
Geoffrey Kinder	Team inspector	Art Equal opportunities	
Roger Holmes	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
David Gaulton	Team inspector	Geography	
David Sylph	Team inspector	History	
Dorothy Barraclough	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Philip Priest	Team inspector	Music	
Jim Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	
Arthur Harvey	Team inspector	Religious education	SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Dennis Barry	Team inspector	General and vocational qualifications (GNVQ)	
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The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Northfield School is on the outskirts of Billingham and stands close to open countryside. There are 1,112 boys and girls age eleven to sixteen in the school, which makes it above average size for a school of this type. There are three pupils with English as an additional language but none of these are in the early stages of English language development. 142 pupils, 14.7 per cent of the school population, are entitled to free school meals and this is broadly average. Unemployment is high in the locality of the school and part of the area that the school draws pupils from is identified as socially and economically deprived by the local authority. Nevertheless, pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. There are 102 pupils, approximately nine per cent, on the school's register of special educational needs and this is below average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, less than one per cent, is also below average.

The attainment of pupils on entry to the school covers the full ability range, but overall it is above average and has risen over recent years.

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

This is an effective school with a number of good features. Standards are rising and the quality of teaching has improved. The school has recently achieved the status of Sports College and this has significantly improved the levels of staffing in the school. The direction for development provided by the headteacher and senior staff is clear. There are sound plans to involve middle managers comprehensively in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and in taking an active role in planning future developments. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils learn well and standards have risen since the last inspection.
- The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are very good.
- Teaching is good or better in two thirds of lessons and has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The headteacher and senior staff of the school provide clear direction for the school to develop and the school development plan is well structured to support this.
- The range of sports, musical activities and clubs provided by the school is very good.
- The community is very involved in the life of the school.

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

- Some higher-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged to do as well as they could in some lessons.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory because there is disjointed provision for personal, social and health education, citizenship, insufficient work-related courses for pupils, and whole school literacy and numeracy policies have not been implemented.
- The roles of middle managers are not sufficiently well developed.
- The accommodation of the school is still inadequate, even though it has improved since the last inspection.
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met, and there is no regular daily act of collective worship.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection, which was in November 1995. The proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations has generally improved. Teaching has improved considerably with a significant reduction in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching seen at that time. Teaching is now good overall and is unsatisfactory in only two per cent of lessons. Improvements in the other issues raised at the last inspection have been recent. There has been satisfactory improvement in monitoring and evaluation techniques, but these are not fully established in all departments as common practice to aid development. There has been sound development of the school's assessment and recording policies. The Code of Practice for special educational needs is in place and work is generally well matched to the needs of pupils with special needs. Developments in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) have been satisfactory overall although the use of ICT is still underdeveloped in some subjects. There has been recent improvement in resources and provision, and plans are detailed; the recent school fire has brought a temporary halt to further development. The school now has a comprehensive premises development plan, although improvements have been limited; the library is still too small for a school of this size, accommodation for some science, English, drama, music and modern foreign languages lessons is inadequate.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	B	B	A	well above            A average above average        B average                C below average        D well below            E average

Results in the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in were below average 2000 overall, although with the support of the LEA, the school is challenging the results in English. Nevertheless, results were lower than those in recent years, at a time when the school's results were rising in line with the national trend. Compared with similar schools, the school's performance is average. Evidence from the inspection suggests that standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average; standards in science are improving as a result of changes in the curriculum. Standards are above average in music, history, geography and religious education and broadly average in other subjects.

In the GCSE examinations in 2000, 49.5 per cent of pupils obtained five or more A\*-C grades and 97.4 per cent of pupils obtained at least one A\*-G grade. The latter was a little lower than the school's target, but the proportion obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was in line with the school's target. These results were close to the national average, but well above average for similar schools. Within the school, results were best in art and design, drama, geography, German, history and physical education. Results in double award science and information technology fell below the results in other subjects. In both of the last two, evidence from the



inspection shows that standards are rising as a result of changes in curriculum and improved resources.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall, although there are no established whole school policies to support teachers' work. Pupils' achievements are generally satisfactory, although there are occasions of higher-attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have positive attitudes to work and work very well, even when unsupervised.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in lessons and around school, particularly in social areas at lunchtimes.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils respect the feelings of others and behave responsibly
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory overall.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection when a significant amount was unsatisfactory. In 98 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better; in 67 per cent of lessons teaching is good or better and in 16 per cent of lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in two per cent of lessons. Teaching is good in science at both key stages, in English at Key Stage 3 and in most other subjects; it is sound in mathematics. The best teaching is characterised by challenging work, knowledgeable teachers and very good classroom relationships which play an important part in encouraging pupils' learning. The pace of lessons is usually brisk and most lessons have clear learning objectives which give pupils a sharp focus on what they are supposed to be learning. In the few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, teachers' management of pupils is poor. In a small number of other lessons where teaching is generally sound, there are occasions when the highest attaining pupils in classes have not been sufficiently challenged, for example in some English and mathematics lessons, and in some resistant materials lessons in design and technology.

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught adequately and sometimes very well by most teachers, but there is no consistency in approach across the school.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall pupils experience a balanced range of subjects at both key stages, although the timetabling arrangements are unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 11 receive insufficient time for religious education. The work-related curriculum is not sufficiently well developed. There are no established whole school literacy and numeracy policies and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) course does not provide a sufficiently coherent experience for pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. There is a varied, effective programme of support for pupils with learning difficulties.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral development is very good and for social development is good. Requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides sound care for its pupils. The behaviour policy is good. Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress is satisfactory overall.

The school works well with parents and involvement with parents and the community is enhanced significantly by the school now having Sports College status.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff provide clear direction for how the school should develop and are taking effective steps to involve middle managers and all staff in planning the school's improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide a high level of support for the school and are fully involved in significant decision making. However, they have not met their statutory responsibility to ensure that all areas of the curriculum are taught and that collective worship takes place on a daily basis.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is a shared commitment to improvement throughout the school, but strategies to monitor and evaluate performance are in the early stages of development. The headteacher and senior staff have carried out observation of teaching where there have been identified problems, with good results. However, systematic observation of teaching is not in place.
The strategic use of resources	The school plans the uses of its resources well and expenditure is linked closely to development plans. Expenditure is carefully monitored to ensure that best value is obtained for available finances.

The school is appropriately staffed with experienced and qualified teachers and classroom assistants. However there are too few administrative staff for a school of this size. The numbers of teaching staff have increased as a result of funding from the Sports College initiative. Accommodation has improved since the last inspection, but is still inadequate; the library is too small but plans are advanced to improve accommodation for science, drama, and modern foreign languages.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children make good progress</li> <li>• Teaching is good and places high expectations on pupils.</li> <li>• Behaviour in the school is good.</li> <li>• Parents feel they can approach the school with problems.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school helps children develop into mature adults</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting ranges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small proportion of parents think that the school does not provide an appropriate amount of homework</li> <li>• Some parents consider that the school does not inform parents sufficiently well about how their children are progressing</li> <li>• Some parents think that the school does not work closely enough with parents.</li> </ul>

At the parents meeting a small number of parents reported that they found it hard to make contact with staff in school.

Generally inspectors agree with the strengths identified by parents. Inspectors are in partial agreement over the quality of reports about pupils' progress; practice is inconsistent and some reports do not provide sufficient information on what pupils know, understand and can do, or provide targets for further progress. Inspectors found however, that the homework provided by the school was satisfactory overall and that the school has a wide range of means to communicate with parents and try to involve them in pupils' education. While no significant difficulties were found in the school's procedures to deal with parents attempting to make contact with staff, the understaffing in the school office does make it hard for all communications to be dealt with promptly. The headteacher is closely involved with the Home-School Association and attends their monthly meetings regularly.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Attainment on entry to the school is above average overall, and represents the full ability range of pupils. Over recent years the attainment of pupils entering the school has risen.

2. In the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in English taken by fourteen year olds in 2000, the proportion of pupils who obtained the average level 5 or higher was below the national average and the proportion of pupils obtaining the higher levels was broadly average. This was out of line with the previously consistently rising standards. Compared with similar schools in 2000, performance was below average. The school is challenging these results with the support of the local education authority. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 or higher was in line with the national average as was the average for the percentage of pupils obtaining the higher levels. This is in line with generally improving results, but above average compared with similar schools. In the National Curriculum tests in science for fourteen year olds in 2000, the proportion of pupils obtaining level 5 or higher was below average and a fall in the results from the previous year. Compared with similar schools, standards were below average.

3. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 3. In English, speaking and listening skills are generally above average while reading and writing are average. Pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory; there are occasional instances where the challenge of work does not stretch pupils sufficiently. In mathematics standards of work are average overall and most pupils achieve satisfactorily. In science standards are broadly average; achievement is satisfactory overall with a few of the most able pupils not achieving as well as they could. This is largely because work is a little prescriptive and there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their initiative. However, this is improving as a result of changes in the curriculum and some reorganisation within the science department. Standards seen in other subjects at the end of Key Stage 3 are above average in music, history, geography and religious education and broadly average in art, design and technology, information and communications technology, modern languages and physical education. Achievement is good in geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious education; in modern foreign languages and physical education pupils come from low starting points.

4. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, 49.5 per cent of pupils obtained five or more A\*-C grades and 97.4 per cent of pupils obtained at least one A\*-G grade. These results were close to the national average, but well above average for similar schools and have improved from last year. The average points scored by pupils at GCSE was above the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. In recent years results have been improving at a rate faster than that seen nationally. In English 56 per cent of pupils obtained A\*-C grades and 44 per cent in mathematics. The results of both are above the average for similar schools. In science 33 per cent of pupils obtained A\*-C grades which was below average nationally and compared with similar schools. As with Key Stage 3, the science department has introduced strategies to combat low results and inspection evidence shows that this is starting to have an impact.

5. Within the school, results were best in art and design, drama, geography, German, history and physical education. Results in double award science and information technology fell below the results in other subjects. In both of the last two, evidence from the inspection

shows that standards are rising as a result of changes in curriculum and improved resources.

6. The school's targets for 2000 were realistic and the school came close to achieving them; the percentage of pupils obtaining one or more A\*-G grade at GCSE was a little lower than the school's target, but the proportion obtaining five or more A\*-C grades was in line with the school's target.

7. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are average overall, and above average in art, geography, history and physical education. In English, pupils' writing skills are above average overall and the small groups the subject is taught in make a significant impact on the progress pupils make. In art, history and geography the enthusiasm of teachers and the good use of resources have a significant impact on standards pupils achieve, and all pupils make good progress. In mathematics, standards are broadly average; there is a small amount of underachievement at both ends of the ability scale, although overall progress is satisfactory. Of the areas of study within mathematics, attainment is lower in the investigative mathematics area. A wide ability range of pupils take music and in Year 11 standards are below average; they are above average in Year 10, where concentration and interest in the subject are good. In Year 10 pupils achieve well. In modern foreign languages, science, religious education, design and technology and physical education standards of work are broadly average. In business education standards of work are below average. Achievement is good in physical education where pupils learn a wide range of sports they have not done before, and in modern foreign languages where there is some enthusiastic teaching. Achievement is sound in business education, science and religious education. It is unsatisfactory in information and communications technology where some pupils have experienced too little time to study the subject. In design and technology pupils achieve well in food and fabrics but less well in resistant materials where expectations are not sufficiently high in some elements of the work.

8. Standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall, although there are no established whole school policies to support teachers' work. Pupils' achievements are generally satisfactory, although there are occasional instances of higher-attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged.

9. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, and many make good progress in both key stages because teachers work closely and sympathetically with them. The younger pupils benefit greatly from systematic and regular teaching in the morning before lessons start. They often use information technology to support them in this work, which focuses mostly on reading, spelling and handwriting. They respond very well to these sessions, are well behaved and have good attitudes. They make good use of the time available. Several older pupils work alongside the younger ones during these sessions, to the benefit of both. It is particularly pleasing to see some older pupils who themselves had benefited from these sessions, supporting the younger pupils, thereby making a positive contribution to their social development.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. Pupils are very committed to learning and are enthusiastic about their school. Their behaviour is almost always very good and they have very good relationships with one another and with school staff. They respond well to opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. Levels of attendance are similar to those found in other schools of this size and unauthorised absence is below the national average.

11. In lessons, pupils concentrate on their set tasks and show real interest in their work. They try hard to do their best, giving considered answers to questions and taking care with their practical work. They are well motivated and clearly enjoy their activities. They work well without direct supervision and sometimes show a high level of independence. When asked to work in pairs or groups they co-operate well. They listen respectfully to the views of others, give support and advice to one another and make corporate decisions based on thoughtful discussion. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson, groups of pupils were asked to prepare tableaux and role-play based on a story. They discussed their ideas, tried them out and agreed amicably on a final version to perform.

12. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils are quick to identify friendliness as one of the aspects of school they like best, together with the kindness of staff. Pupils show genuine care for one another and try hard to please their teachers. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the life of the school, including those who come from a nearby special school to share the sporting facilities. They are accepted and welcomed by the Northfield pupils. Bullying is seldom seen in school, and there is no evidence of sexism or racism.

13. Behaviour in lessons is almost always very good, and sometimes excellent. Very occasionally, a small minority of pupils can behave thoughtlessly and disrupt the lesson for others, but such behaviour is rare and is firmly dealt with by senior staff. There have been isolated instances when a pupil's behaviour has been sufficiently extreme to trigger the ultimate sanction of exclusion. This occurs only when all other disciplinary avenues have been exhausted. Often the bad behaviour is caused by a problem that has arisen outside school, so staff liaise with outside agencies to provide support for the excluded pupil and his or her family, as well as making appropriate arrangements for monitoring behaviour when a return to school is agreed.

14. Around the school, behaviour is always orderly and calm, in spite of the narrow staircases and cramped social areas, which pupils use sensibly and treat with the respect for property that staff encourage. The absence of litter and graffiti and the condition of furniture and equipment show that pupils take proper care of their environment.

15. Pupils are very keen to take on responsibility and often show high levels of personal initiative. Prefects in Year 11 take on a wide range of duties that help the smooth running of the school as well as developing their own self confidence and social skills. They act as mentors to the younger pupils, checking their planners and listening to problems. A group of prefects is currently writing a pantomime to be performed by pupils. Some Year 10 pupils help with additional reading support for younger ones with special needs, and have earned praise and gratitude from a neighbouring special school for their help on its Sports Day. Many charities benefit from the efforts of pupils, who often suggest and organise fund-raising activities with no outside help.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

16. Teaching is good overall and in 98 per cent of lessons it is satisfactory or better. In 67 per cent of lessons teaching is good or better and in 16 per cent of lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. At the last inspection a significant proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory – this has reduced to teaching being unsatisfactory in only two per cent of lessons at the time of this inspection.

17. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is evident in the quality of explanations, questioning and the relevance of work they provide. This establishes pupils' interest,

concentration and involvement in lessons. In art, for example, teachers' skills are evident and this encourages pupils to try to achieve well. Expectations are generally good and although there are instances where pupils are not challenged sufficiently, generally teachers' expectations are realistically high and this has a positive effect on pupils; they rise to the challenge. For example, in a year 10 geography lesson on the problems immigrants experience on coming to the United Kingdom, pupils reacted positively to the challenge of preparing and delivering presentations and produced materials which were well structured and showed their understanding of the issues. Where expectations are not high enough, pupils produce mediocre work, for example, in their planning and preparation for making articles in the resistant materials part of design and technology. There are also some occasions in English, mathematics and science when pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

18. Teachers plan lessons well and organise a wide range of tasks to help pupils learn in an ordered manner. The majority of lessons contain clear objectives that are shared with pupils; this is an effective way to aid learning because pupils then understand the reason behind the work they do and in most lessons this was apparent. Teachers plan a wide range of activities in lessons, so that the learning experiences of pupils are varied and this is effective in maintaining concentration and recognising that pupils have different learning needs. In physical education, lessons are very well planned to include sequences of activities that help pupils develop their skills in a logical manner. In history the planned use of resources enhances pupils' learning. On occasion planning is less effective, for example, in including opportunities in lessons in design and technology (resistant materials) to reinforce the correct use of tools.

19. Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is very good and frequently excellent. Teachers have established very good relationships with pupils and this is the core of the good learning seen in most classrooms. It also provides an atmosphere in which pupils feel confident to question, try out their ideas and attempt to explain their understanding. This was seen in science and art, for example, and had a significant effect on pupils' learning. In a few lessons, in modern foreign languages, unsatisfactory management of pupils due to poor relationships, led to unsatisfactory learning.

20. Teachers use a wide range of resources in lessons to aid pupils' learning. This is evident in most lessons, most significantly in science, religious education and physical education. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and this helps maintain pupils' concentration effectively. The quality of marking is sound overall and in modern foreign languages, for example, is used well to provide pupils with guidance on how to improve their work. Homework is set regularly and contributes to the work pupils do in lessons.

21. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Teachers have high expectations and individually establish effective strategies in their own lessons. Nevertheless, whole school policies are not in place which means there is no ensured consistency of approach.

22. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers provide good guidance for pupils so that they develop their subject knowledge and understanding and make good progress. Teachers are receptive to pupils' individual needs. They usually ensure that boys and girls mix well in lessons. They treat pupils fairly and this develops effectively the principles of tolerance and respect. Many teachers celebrate the work and achievements of pupils of all attainments through effective displays of work around the school, especially in art. Teachers are particularly responsive to the specific learning needs of pupils and are well supported by the learning support assistants in dealing with issues such as hearing and visual impairment.



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

23. The curriculum covers the full range of academic subjects at Key Stage 3 but the arrangements to teach personal and social education (PSE) through drama in Year 7 do not cover all aspects of the subject. At Key Stage 4 many of the requirements for a balanced curriculum are in place but there is insufficient time for religious education (RE), problems with the coverage of physical education (PE) and few alternatives to GCSE courses for those pupils who might learn better in different ways. Consequently, despite it having some strengths the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

24. As Key Stage 3, all National Curriculum subjects and RE are covered. Most subjects have sufficient time on the timetable to cover the work, but in Year 9 music and drama are squeezed by each having only one lesson in alternate weeks. Presently, pupils taking up German miss a lesson of PE each week. There are plans to address this next year. The most serious problem though, is the provision of PSE in the key stage. Whilst drama lessons provide a good way of exploring some of the issues raised in PSE, such as the response to bullying, the whole area cannot be covered in this way. Currently, pupils are not being taught the full range of PSE. However, there is comprehensive teaching of sex education and drugs awareness issues.

25. At Key Stage 4 pupils are taught a core group of subjects which match statutory requirements, and then opt for other subjects which are arranged in groups to help pupils achieve a balanced curriculum.

26. In many cases this is successful, however PE is not included as an option and pupils following an examination course in PE have to do so within the two periods per week that everyone has. This reduces the time they have for physical activity and means they do not receive their entitlement as defined by the National Curriculum. In practice, many of these pupils follow extra-curricular activities in PE which go some way to compensating for the problem. Religious education is taught in Year 10 but not in Year 11, where it is replaced by lessons in careers. This does not provide enough time to cover the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for RE. The academic curriculum is enriched by the inclusion of Latin for some pupils, some of which is taught at lunchtime, but pupils following the course also miss a lesson of PE, which further compounds the problem described above. This situation is changing with the introduction of Latin in Year 8 as an extracurricular subject. More pupils want to take music than can be accommodated by the options system, to compensate for this the teacher takes additional classes after school.

27. All courses at Key Stage 4 are based on GCSE syllabuses. In a few subjects, such as English, mathematics and modern languages, pupils who are unlikely to achieve well in GCSE examinations are entered for Certificates of Achievement instead. At the moment there are no alternative approaches to subjects which involve pupils learning in a different way, more relevant to their needs.

28. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Sport and music are particularly strong. Pupils take part successfully in a wide range of competitive games and the dance club is flourishing. Music has a high profile and the school has a justified reputation for its band and choirs, with many boys and girls involved. There are also clubs and out-of-school activities in art, drama and IT. Many other departments also have informal arrangements for pupils to continue with work at lunch times.

29. There are very strong links with the community, which help pupils to develop an awareness of their place in the world outside school and of their responsibility towards it. The curriculum is enhanced by a very wide range of activities which bring pupils into contact with people and organisations, locally, nationally and internationally. There are established links with schools in Norway and Germany and organised holidays and educational visits to a number of other European countries, as well as more local field trips and excursions to support the learning that takes place in the classroom. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, for example on a residential visit to Mallorca pupils took part in testing outdoor activities as well as learning about a different culture. Nearer to home, pupils' participation in a Spring Clean Initiative earned them praise from the city council and local residents.

30. By undertaking fund raising for many local and national charities, pupils learn about the needs of other people and, in seeking to help, they also gain valuable experience in organisational and social skills. For example, two pupils in Year 8 are currently organising a Christmas party for senior citizens which has involved conducting surveys, looking for volunteers and planning catering. Last year, during a sports marathon, pupils wore blindfolds to help them understand the problems of the visually impaired.

31. The school also enjoys some fruitful links with businesses, some of which provide sponsorship for activities such as the exchange programme with Norway, while others lend their professional expertise to support the careers education programme or to provide work experience placements. Funding for the successful Sports College bid was raised from local industry and commerce.

32. The school offers a short programme of careers education and guidance at the end of Year 9 and this is repeated in Year 10. In Year 11, all pupils receive one lesson per week of careers education and guidance. Overall the time allocation for careers education in Years 9, 10, and 11 is insufficient although the library resources to support careers work are good and staff are dedicated to providing a good quality of service.

33. Work experience takes place for all year 11 pupils for two weeks. Since the last inspection, the work experience programme is funded and organised in partnership with Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council, with which the school has good links. Pupils are heavily involved with their teachers in the process of planning and preparation for work experience using their initiative and knowledge of local employment information provided through use of the Internet. Pupils are required to nominate their choice of placements, fill an application form, complete a CV and prepare for an interview. The work experience programme is highly valued by all pupils and well supported by local employers.

34. The local careers service provider offers good advisory support to the school, which is directed mainly towards a targeted group of pupils in year 11. The school has good links with nearby further education colleges whose staff visit the school to discuss further education opportunities and similarly, pupils travel to college campuses to sample learning in a further education college.

35. Thoughtful and well-documented arrangements ensure that the transfer from primary to secondary school is smooth and free from stress, and the school has strong links with the local sixth form college, which encourage pupils to continue their education beyond the age of sixteen. Extensive sporting links as a result of the school's Sports College status have a very positive effect on the school's reputation in the local community.

36. The school's provision for the spiritual development of pupils is broadly satisfactory. However, since the last inspection, the provision for collective daily acts of worship for all

pupils has not improved. All pupils attend a year assembly each week. Assemblies are interesting and offer pupils a worthwhile experience. The content of assemblies is relevant to pupils and pupils have an opportunity to share in a prayer, if they wish to do so. In English, history, art, music and religious education opportunities are provided for pupils to gain insight into beliefs, values and human emotions. Pupils are taught about such themes as innocent suffering, the sanctity of human life, religion during the reign of Elizabeth I, and appreciate the creative processes and their results in art and music. They also learn about the non-material aspects of human personality and the expression of these in worship and symbolism.

37. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good and effective. Pupils are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong behaviour and to take responsibility for their actions. The school has a clear code of conduct, which encourages positive behaviour. Most pupils understand it and the school's "Circles of Respect" together with the system of rewards and sanctions. The code of conduct, the policies on bullying and racism and the emphasis on respect and care towards other people, are effective in reinforcing positive moral values. In English, geography and religious education the moral aspects of such themes as sexual morality, the holocaust, abortion, euthanasia, racial conflict in society and the need for rules on the sports field and in society are explored. Moral problems are sometimes explored in assemblies.

38. The provision for pupils' social development is good. All subjects offer pupils opportunities to develop and practise social skills. Pupils have opportunities for taking responsibility. There are opportunities for pupils to become school prefects, year and school council representatives, assistant librarians, mentors who help younger pupils with reading and organisers of various events. Pupils are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of people in the wider community by raising money for charities such as the NSPCC or giving toys to the local Butterwick Childrens' Hospice and food to the social services department for distribution locally. In the guidance programme pupils learn about citizenship in a democratic society.

39. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. In English, history, music, art and religious education, and in a varied range of extra-curricular clubs, especially in music and physical education, students learn about British culture past and present. First hand experience of European cultures is gained through visits to France, Germany and Norway. Pupils also make visits to theatres, York Minster and centres of cultural interest within this country. Musicians and a blacksmith have performed for pupils and worked with them. Pupils are alerted to non-western cultures in art, geography, music, and religious education. They learn about the contribution of Hindu culture to Indian lifestyle, the effects of tourism on the life style of the Masai and the influence of beliefs on dress, food and behaviour in four religions. Limited use is made of non-western art and music. Respect and tolerance for the beliefs and culture of others underlie the provision. Nevertheless, the school as a whole does not have sufficient planned opportunities to increase pupils' appreciation of ethnic minority cultures in the community by, for example, celebrating in school the contributions and achievements of non-western cultures.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

40. Overall, the school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The pastoral systems, alongside the quality of relationships throughout the school, ensure that pupils' personal development is monitored and supported. There are some minor lapses in the formal implementation of health and safety policies, although there is no cause for concern in practice. There are also some minor health and safety concerns related to the school building.

41. The pastoral system, based on tutor groups under the overall care of a head of year, is effective in ensuring that teachers know pupils well. Heads of year stay with the year group throughout their time at the school to preserve continuity. Personal development is routinely monitored when group tutors regularly check planners, as well as through the informal contacts that pupils have with heads of year and class teachers. This means that any difficulties can be quickly identified and appropriate action taken. Pupils trust their teachers and are confident to approach them with problems of any kind. There is extensive support from visiting specialists, such as the educational psychologist and learning support teachers, and when appropriate, the school can call on the services of the community police officer or education social worker to give help where it is needed. There are very good arrangements for routine first aid and pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle by participation in sports. The catering service promotes healthy eating. The guidance programme ensures that pupils are taught about the dangers of drugs, as well as exploring topics such as bullying, relationships and personal safety. Parents and pupils agree that there is very little bullying, but any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school. Procedures to ensure child protection are properly in place, staff are vigilant and pupils know what to do if they have any anxieties.

42. Teachers maintain good order in lessons by their consistent application of the behaviour policy and the school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are largely successful. Parents are discouraged from taking holidays in term time and pupils appreciate the award of merits for good attendance or behaviour.

43. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy which covers all aspects of school life. Careful checks are regularly made on the building and equipment and these are backed up by systems and instructions which ensure that risk assessments are carried out when needed, for example when pupils go on trips. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Because there are no checks on how departments implement their safety procedures, sometimes there can be lapses, for example there is no separate written policy in some curricular areas. However, staff are careful to observe safe practices during lessons. The building also generates some health and safety concerns, for example, there are external doors that need to be locked in windy weather and dampness and condensation in some outside classrooms and a music practice room. The school is aware of these difficulties and is seeking to address them.

44. A key issue in the last report was 'to take steps to ensure implementation of all aspects of the school's policy for assessment and recording'. The school has now reviewed and updated its policy. All departments now have a policy and established procedure and arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are overall satisfactory. Assessment is good in modern foreign languages, music and satisfactory in others. The marking of pupils' work is regular and supportive with encouraging comments. Pupils are informed how they are progressing, however not all marking tells pupils what they need to do to improve. All departments make sure that pupils' effort, academic attainment and progress are assessed and recorded.

45. The school makes use of assessment data. All pupils are tested on entry to the school and results of standardised Key Stage 2 tests are used effectively to plan groups for mathematics, though less so for English and science. Test results in Years 10 and 11 are used to set targets and to forecast achievement for GCSE but much of this analysis is at an early stage of development. There is analysis of examination results and this data is used to set targets.

46. All pupils receive full reports at the end of the year and where applicable are informed of the national curriculum levels. However, comments in reports do not consistently provide sufficient information on what pupils know, understand and can do, or provide targets to aid pupils' further progress. Parents are invited to attend a consultative evening to discuss progress. The are good assessment procedures to guide curricular planning in the majority of subjects but unsatisfactory in art and science.

47. The school has effective procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs using National Curriculum scores at the end of Key Stage 2 and from tests completed on entering the school. The records kept on each pupil are used effectively to plan future work with pupils. Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve. The assessment requirements of the Code of Practise are fully met.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

48. The school has a strong partnership with parents, who are happy with the standards that pupils achieve and with the way the school provides for their educational and personal development. Most parents who completed the inspection questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting find staff approachable and believe that they provide good help and support for pupils. They are pleased that pupils are expected to work hard and are encouraged to develop mature, responsible attitudes.

49. Concerns were expressed by a small number of parents about the amount of homework set; they felt that there was too little, or that too much was given for one night. Parents were also concerned about the level and quality of information provided on their children's progress. Some did not feel that the school works closely with parents. A recent survey of parents' views undertaken by the school identified the same issues. The school has responded by setting specific targets in the school development plan to improve communication with parents and to rationalise the way homework is set. Inspectors found that the quality and quantity of homework is mostly satisfactory. The inspection also found that the school provides a wide range of good quality information for parents, covering the practical aspects of school life as well as details of what is being taught. The prospectus and newsletters are attractively presented and are written in a friendly style that is easy to understand. Formal consultation evenings, when parents may speak to individual teachers, are held annually for each year group and heads of year or form tutors are always prepared to respond to informal approaches from parents about educational or pastoral issues. The school tries to ensure that parents are kept aware of developments in the curriculum, for example each year departments provide a summary of work to be covered. It also encourages parents to be involved in important decisions such as option choices. School reports are variable in quality. Some give detailed information about what pupils know, understand and can do, and set targets for improvement, but most are bland and concentrate on pupils' attitudes to school.

50. Some parents are closely involved in the life of the school. The flourishing Home and School Association arranges fund raising events to provide additional resources for the benefit of pupils, for example it raised £10,000 to start off the bid for Sports College status, as well as organising social events which help to create a sense of community for parents, staff and pupils. Although attendance at consultation evenings is not as high as the school would like, many parents show their commitment to supporting pupils' learning by using the planners as a means of checking what work is being done, and as a means of communicating with teachers when appropriate. Support for events involving the pupils themselves, such as music and drama productions or sporting fixtures, is always good.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The school is well led and managed and the senior management team provides a very clear direction for how the school can improve its performance. The headteacher and deputy heads work very well together and the level of collaboration has led to a well-structured school development plan that sets clear targets for improvement. They have introduced strategies to involve heads of department in development planning and this is starting to be effective. Changing the structure of how money is allocated to subjects has had a significant effect on focusing attention on forward planning for development rather than replacement of resources.

52. The school development plan is well constructed and reflects the input of the whole school. It is very much a working document, part of a process and responsive to the changing needs of the school. It provides clear direction for the school to improve and the means by which improvements can take place. It has, for example, detailed plans of how provision for information and communications technology is to improve, what resources and accommodation are needed and the training required for staff to become competent in teaching the subject. Plans include a new appointment of someone to oversee the work done, to expand it further and to support staff where required. Provision for information and communications technology has improved since the last inspection.

53. The senior team have been quite determined to raise standards. Since the last inspection the headteacher and deputy heads have undertaken considerable work to improve teaching. They have observed teaching where there have been known problems and set plans in motion to bring about improvements: these have been successful. There is now a concerted drive to support heads of department in acquiring the skills to help them become effective in evaluating the work of their departments. There have been some positive developments with this and plans are advanced to continue development in this area. The senior team has established the process of departments setting their own GCSE targets and analysing examination results as an effective way to promote improvement, and this is starting to have a positive impact on how teachers work.

54. The school has sound procedures to observe teaching, make constructive feedback and to start to share good practice. This has been mostly carried out by the headteacher and deputy heads. Heads of departments are not sufficiently involved in this process, where it can have the most immediate impact on improving teaching in individual subjects. The established system is being used effectively to arrive at performance management targets, however, and the planned involvement of heads of department is intended to make a positive contribution to this process.

55. Governors play a significant role in shaping the school's direction for development. They visit the school regularly and have played an important part in helping the school plan its development. They gather information through their visits and from heads of department and this has led to them having a good understanding of the strengths of the school and how it needs to develop. They were instrumental in helping the school produce its premises development plan and in its successful bid to become a Sports College. Governors decisions are based on accurate and detailed information. Nevertheless, they do not meet their statutory obligations in all respects; the school does not provide a regular daily act of worship even though the quality of whole-school and class assemblies that take place are good; religious education is not taught to Year 11 pupils; literacy and numeracy policies have not been implemented.

56. Governors work closely with the school in planning the budget. Costings are worked out carefully and the school always seeks good value for its money through taking several quotes for planned work or provision of facilities and resources. The Sports College initiative has enabled the school to use available funds imaginatively to improve staffing so that the whole school benefits. Financial planning and expenditure is closely linked to the development plan.

57. Induction of newly-qualified teachers into the school is good. There is a well-structured programme that ensures that their performance is carefully monitored and provides them with effective guidance and training opportunities, both inside and outside the school. The induction procedures for other newly appointed teachers are satisfactory. The school provides effective initial teacher training in six subjects, in partnership with a local university. There are clear, detailed procedures for managing teachers' professional development that provide satisfactory opportunities for training to support developments.

58. The match between the number, qualifications and experience of teachers and the demands of the curriculum is good. There is a good balance of recently appointed and long-serving staff and teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. The quality of the teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The level of technical support for the curriculum is generally satisfactory and additional staff for the Sports' College are deployed effectively. However, there is insufficient support for school administration and for the library. The provision of learning support assistants is satisfactory and they work effectively with teachers to support pupils with special educational needs?

59. In spite of some outstanding new developments in provision, the overall quality of the school's accommodation is unsatisfactory and is having an adverse effect on the standards of achievement of some pupils in some subject areas. While much of the building is adequate for its purpose, and is in a reasonable state of repair, there are a number of major deficiencies to be addressed, some of which were also identified in the previous inspection report. Library accommodation is inadequate for a school of this size. Its location causes it to be used as a corridor and, because of the pressure on space throughout the school, it has to be used as a teaching area for most of the week. Consequently, it cannot be used for its primary purpose, and pupils are reluctant to use it outside of lesson time because there is insufficient room for them to work. The school is aware of the problem and has made it a priority for future development. The school's popularity has contributed to the pressure on available space. The newly enhanced sports complex provides an excellent facility which is encouraging pupils to participate enthusiastically in the different activities offered. It is already widely used by partner schools and will be an even greater asset to the local community when planned extensions are complete.

60. Accommodation for music is poor. The two practice rooms are too small and lack sound insulation, and their location means that lessons are frequently disrupted by pupils arriving for instrumental tuition. Limited space means that pupils in Year 9 have half the number of lessons they should have and some classes in other year groups have to use non-specialist rooms, which restricts their learning opportunities and affects their attitude to the subject. Accommodation for drama is inadequate. Most lessons take place in the hall, which is an open-sided space, subject to noise and intrusion, as well as making some pupils feel inhibited about being watched. There is no other suitable area for drama classes to take place. Some science lessons are taught outside of laboratories. Staff do their best to overcome these difficulties, some of which will be resolved when planned new classrooms are built. Social areas are dark and cramped, although the school has equipped them with benches and pupils use them sensibly.

61. The school was most unfortunate to suffer fire damage to the newly completed food court and cybercafe. When these are restored, they too will provide an excellent facility for pupils and eventually for the wider community.

62. Security lighting and CCTV have helped to preserve the school from vandalism, but it must be noted that the emphasis laid on teaching pupils respect for their environment also plays a significant part in protecting the building.

63. Overall, the school uses its accommodation well. However, the limited accommodation adversely affects learning in some subjects, for example the modern languages department is split into two separate areas and geography is taught in six different rooms.

64. Learning resources overall are satisfactory. The proportion of expenditure on these has increased in 2000. Priorities are identified by heads of department, both for annual capitation and for standards fund which are forecast over a three-year period. This is done responsibly and realistically. The deputy headteacher responsible oversees these bids and retains a contingency fund. Currently, no subject area is seriously under-resourced and teachers use facilities well. PE stands out as very good since the school gained specialist status for sport and is now funded separately, even for teaching staff. Resources in geography, history and information and communications technology are good, as they are for work in Key Stage 3 in English. Resources in other subjects are satisfactory – a balance of good features and some deficiencies. Among continuing needs is the provision for updating of computers in English, modern foreign languages, design technology and art. The latter also lacks a kiln. Most of these shortages are already identified in the school's development planning. Extra funding resulting from a local authority appeal for re-rating has been used directly to aid learning by fitting many more rooms with mounted television and video. This was used to good effect during the inspection, for example in religious education and geography. The New Opportunities Fund, intended for learning activities after school, has made possible the Cyber café, sadly out of use during the inspection because of accidental fire. Income from band concerts has allowed the purchase of new instruments.

65. As the library is too small, even for its present stock, it is under-resourced. For example, there are no revision texts for GCSE science and no recorded music or means to listen to it. There are some videos, a few CD-ROMs and 'talking books', and five computers. The catalogue is still in card-index form. Some theft also occurs. The teacher responsible has only tutor time and free periods currently, and allocated technician time is insufficient. Voluntary help, both adult and that of properly organised older pupils, enables borrowing to happen. Access is restricted to non-class times since the space is used regularly for teaching. The teacher is very aware of these deficiencies and regularly updates her knowledge of developments elsewhere. The school has sensible plans to convert a covered outside area into a library and resources centre, but these are not part of the present building plans.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- I. Raise attainment by providing consistently challenging work in lessons so that higher-attaining pupils achieve as well as they are capable. (3, 7, 70, 75, 79, 88, 101, 103)
  
- II. Improve the curriculum by:
  - implementing the school's literacy and numeracy policies, (8, 21, 55, 80)
  - providing a continuous programme of personal, social and health education for pupils as they move through the school, (23, 24)
  - providing work related courses to meet the specific needs of some pupils, (23, 27)
  - ensuring that the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education are fully met. (26, 55, 146)
  
- III. Continuing to develop the roles of middle managers by providing
  - opportunities to acquire a wide range of management skills, (53)
  - opportunities to widen their experience in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments so that identified good practice can be effectively shared. (54, 71, 83, 113)
  
- IV. Explore ways, in conjunction with the local authority to improve the accommodation of the school in line with its premises development plan. (59, 60, 65)
  
- V. Meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship. (36, 55)

Other minor issues which should be considered by the school:

- Ensuring that reports on pupils' progress consistently comment on what pupils know, understand and can do, and provide targets to help pupils make further progress, (46, 81, 142)
- Resolving the timetabling difficulties experienced by some subjects, (26, 32, 132, 141)
- Continuing the work to ensure all subjects make sufficient use of ICT, (92, 99, 116, 123, 128, 153) and,
- Establishing a whole school approach to spread the good practice seen in some subjects in celebrating the contributions and achievements of non-western cultures. (39)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	188
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	15	52	31	2	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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,112
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	142

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7– Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	102

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	per cent
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	per cent
School data	0.5
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**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	106	97	203

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	65	51
	Girls	72	69	58
	Total	116	134	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (81)	66 (58)	53 (50)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (37)	38 (31)	18 (15)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70	65	56
	Girls	81	72	68
	Total	151	137	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	74 (76)	68 (59)	60 (52)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (36)	39 (31)	24 (17)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	102	132	234

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	42	96	99
	Girls	73	128	128
	Total	115	224	227
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	49.5 (49)	95.7 (97)	97.4 (99)
	National	49.0 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (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	41 (40)
	National	38.7 (38.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	per cent success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	n/a
	National	n/a

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1,104
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	11	2
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	66.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	234.5

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	18.6

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2, 505, 644
Total expenditure	2,450,697
Expenditure per pupil	2,269
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,352
Balance carried forward to next year	86,299

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,112
Number of questionnaires returned	509

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	53	8	3	2
My child is making good progress in school.	30	55	6	1	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	56	6	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	57	14	4	3
The teaching is good.	28	57	6	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	47	17	5	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	46	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	39	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	49	14	4	8
The school is well led and managed.	36	48	3	2	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	52	6	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	40	5	1	9

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents are generally pleased with the school. At the meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection, a small number of parents expressed concern about not being able to make contact easily with staff when they wanted to and that issues were not followed up. However, the inspection team found that the school does follow up issues regularly and that the headteacher attends a monthly meeting with parents where parents are invited to discuss issues that concern them.

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

### **ENGLISH**

66. In the end of Key Stage 3, tests results have been consistently at levels well above both national averages and the expected levels for similar schools (81 per cent at level 5 or above in 1999, compared to 64 per cent nationally). However, the results for 2000 fell below national expectations and were low compared to those achieved by similar schools. The school is appealing against these results. Key Stage 4 GCSE results have improved each year since 1998, with a significant (10 per cent) improvement in 2000, which has brought them in line with the national averages (school 56 per cent A\*-C grades compared to the national figure of 54 per cent).

67. Standards observed during the inspection were in line with national expectations overall and at Key Stage 4 were above average for written work. At both key stages, pupils take evident pride in the presentation of their written work and there is wide and effective use made of the drafting process. This is used to improve presentation, but pupils also improve the narrative structure, sentence construction, vocabulary and spelling of their work through this process. They understand and are able to explain the important role of drafting in their writing. However, there is no routine use of the opportunities offered by information technology for this purpose. At Key Stage 4, small classes are used effectively to improve the quality of GCSE written coursework, which is good and has been a factor in improving performance at the higher GCSE grades in 2000. Pupils know how to structure formal essays, can write effectively in an appropriate range of styles for specific purposes and they understand the importance of accuracy and presentation. The small class sizes enable teachers to provide detailed one-to-one support and advice.

68. Standards of reading are in line with those found nationally at both key stages. Pupils are encouraged to read widely in addition to class texts. Reading for pleasure is successfully promoted through special events such as world book day and on a routine basis through a new scheme of award certificates. In class, pupils felt confident and secure in volunteering to read and did so with enthusiasm and meaning, across the attainment range. By the end of Key Stage 3, comprehension and appreciation skills are good, and pupils can successfully identify the role of such elements as plot, character and themes when discussing texts. This level of literary appreciation becomes more mature at Key Stage 4 with the study of different genres and a growing awareness of authors' use of language and its effect on the reader.

69. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in the school, particularly at Key Stage 3, where they are above national expectations. Pupils speak with confidence in class and are encouraged to do so by their teachers. They are also helped by the sensitivity, support and respect with which pupils greet each other's contributions. They confidently answer questions, are able to clearly articulate an understanding of their work using varied and appropriate vocabulary and a growing awareness of, and facility in, using Standard English. At Key Stage 4, pupils are more reticent in whole group situations, but show clear progress in using more complex sentences and a vocabulary appropriate to the more difficult concepts often under discussion. For example, the relationship between style and content in a Year 11 class, or about the nature of reality as interpreted through television, tabloid newspapers and broadsheets in Year 10 are discussed fluently. At both key stages, pupils are used to working purposefully in pairs and small groups and using language in these contexts to persuade and negotiate, for example in a Year 9 class working on narrative sequences.

70. Pupils at both key stages listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. At Key Stage 3, however, higher attaining pupils are not routinely given the opportunity to explore and develop more challenging ideas, either in terms of speaking and listening or in their written work. The situation is similar for lower-achieving pupils including those with identified special educational needs. While teachers are aware of individual education plans, there is no evidence that these were being used to modify teaching strategies for individual pupils, while higher attaining pupils did not have access to planned opportunities designed to extend or deepen their skills, knowledge or understanding. Progress of lower-attaining pupils was an issue in the last inspection report, and while progress has been made there is still no consistent departmental approach to the issue of differentiation with regard to low or high attainers.

71. A linked issue from the previous inspection was the lack of 'collaborative planning'. It is still the case that departmental planning, the sharing of good practice and the development of a whole department approach to issues such as assessment, information technology, and adopting strategies that would allow greater flexibility for low and high attainers, are left to 'informal' contact between members of the department. While teachers frequently have individually good approaches, there are no consistent and coherent strategies across the department designed to monitor attainment and raise achievement: there is no routine monitoring of books or observation of teaching by the head of department and there is limited documentation concerning expectations of teachers with regard to such issues.

72. Teaching, is good and is a strength of the department. It is better at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 and in all lessons it is at least satisfactory, with half being good or very good; it is very good in one in six lessons. In all cases there is careful planning, clear structure and motivating work led by teachers who have secure knowledge of their subject and how to teach it. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress although in the case of high-attaining pupils this is not always the case. Where teaching is good, there is more rigorous challenge, with pupils' responses more carefully thought through, and where the teaching is very good, teachers share clear learning objectives with the pupils and relate these to assessment, so that pupils understand why they are doing the work, how they will be assessed, what they need to do in order achieve a good assessment and how the lesson fits into the context of the whole unit or course. A plenary session shared good work and reinforced the learning objectives. In these lessons, learning is effective for pupils of all levels of attainment, with pupils challenged to produce their personal best in response to the explicitly high expectations of the teacher.

73. Attitudes to learning in all observed lesson are good, as is behaviour, deriving essentially from the good teacher-pupil relations and appropriately engaging work found in lessons.

## **DRAMA**

74. In the last report, drama was described as a popular subject with high standards of teaching. It remains popular, with three large groups now taking GCSE, and teaching remains a strength, with all observed lessons at least satisfactory, and good or very good in two thirds. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and how to teach it, at times inspiringly, and they have explicitly high expectations of pupils in terms of attainment and behaviour. Pupils respond by working well and standards of learning and behaviour are correspondingly good. The role of the department within the school has recently deepened and in Year 7 the subject is used to teach aspects of the school's personal and social education programme, for example through units such as one on 'Bullying'. However, the accommodation in which drama is taught remains as unsatisfactory as it was reported as



being in the last report. There has been no improvement on this issue, though with greater numbers and its enhanced whole-school role it is now an even more pressing matter.

## **MATHEMATICS**

75. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Results for the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and GCSE in 2000 indicated that standards are improving. While most pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs, and some make good progress, a small number of lower-attaining and higher-attaining pupils are under-performing by the end of Key Stage 4.

76. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils reaching the average level 5 or higher, was in line with the national average and was above average compared with pupils in similar schools. The percentage of pupils obtaining level 6 or higher was broadly average and above the average of similar schools. Results have improved since 1999. Standards have been close to the national average since 1996, with a similar upward trend. Nevertheless, the percentage achieving level 5 or higher has improved. The attainment of boys is better than girls.

77. Inspection findings confirm that standards are broadly average. By Year 9 lower attaining pupils understand the meaning of percentage, and what a numerator and denominator are. They write percentages as vulgar fractions, and simplify them. The average-attaining pupils develop sound calculating strategies and use negative and positive numbers competently, but they are not secure in cancelling down or in working out percentages. They are not able to subtract  $-4$  from  $+6$ . Higher-attaining pupils know how to use the appropriate formulae for finding the circumference and areas of circles, and they can work out the angles in triangles.

78. Standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 are in line with the national averages. Boys performed better than girls overall. All pupils, but especially girls, under-perform at the highest grades. A few pupils fail to gain a GCSE, but some lower-attaining pupils are successful in modules of the NPR examination.

79. Inspection findings confirm that standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average. Lower attaining pupils understand the concept of ratios, and can, for example, cancel down  $8:14$  to  $4:7$ . They interpret simple diagrams, draw pictograms, measure sides of triangles, calculate angles, work on simple probability problems and number patterns. Some are not able to add ten test scores together and work out the mean. Average-attaining pupils compare distributions and work out mean, mode and median from grouped data and frequency tables confidently and competently. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding that is evident in their good grasp of algebraic processes and, for example, in their knowledge that the difference of two squares can be used numerically as well as algebraically and that they factorise quadratic equations. Nevertheless, targets set for some pupils by teachers are not always sufficiently challenging.

80. The mathematics department contributes soundly to developing literacy skills through use of key words, although pupils' speaking skills are not developed sufficiently. There are too few opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. Satisfactory use is made of information technology. Numeracy skills are not routinely planned for in lessons in other subjects of the National Curriculum, though there are some good examples, such as in geography, design & technology and modern foreign languages.

81. The quality of teaching is sound overall. Teaching is good in Year 10. Teaching in all lessons seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory, and about 1 in every 2 lessons

observed in both key stages were good. Teaching is most effective in lessons taught by full time mathematics teachers. Most teachers use good subject knowledge to make presentations, with a beneficial effect on pupils' appreciation of the importance of step-by-step approaches and attention to detail. Teachers need to explain more clearly what pupils are to learn, but planning otherwise is sound. The use of timed targets is often helpful to the pace of working. Teachers' use of questioning to involve large numbers of pupils in recapping prior learning and the extension of ideas into new areas is under-used, as is the use of investigations to encourage the exploration of mathematics, particularly for the younger pupils. Some younger pupils are too quick simply to copy others. Teachers have established a partnership and good working relationship with pupils, especially the older ones, with a well-developed working atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers make sound use of resources such as text books, but opportunities to use more interesting resources to enhance learning in numeracy skills are under-developed. Marking is regular, but there are too many examples where pupils are not explicitly told what they need to do to improve their work. Too many pupils are not aware of their targets in the subject, and reports to parents are not informative about what pupils know, understand and can do in mathematics. Some of the older and higher-attaining pupils benefit from working in small groups; they make faster progress because they are able to discuss their understanding of mathematical processes. Some teachers do little to make their classrooms attractive. Others provide interesting displays of pupils' work, ensuring that examples from the full ability range are used. The teaching of numeracy skills is underdeveloped.

82. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are usually very good. Most lessons are characterised by an atmosphere of quiet and purposeful activity, which is well supported by the relatively small numbers of pupils in classes, especially in Key Stage 4. Some pupils are not confident to put forward their own ideas or to ask for help if they need it. Many pupils are over-reliant on the teacher. Some of the younger girls lack interest and motivation. There are few opportunities for collaborative learning and pupils are slow get on with their work when unsure how to approach a task.

83. The head of mathematics is well supported by all colleagues. There is a good balance of maintenance and development items in the departmental planning, but the latter lack focus and are not linked to measurable success criteria for teachers in order to raise achievement. The department does not sufficiently monitor teaching and learning. There is an appropriate assessment system, and a system to record to track each pupil's progress as they move through the school. The department sometimes analyses data to quantify the progress pupils make, but not regularly enough. Nonetheless, when this is done, the information is used well to inform curriculum planning. The quality of accommodation and resources is satisfactory.

84. Since the last inspection progress has been made in raising standards at both key stages. There are still some shortcomings in the quality of learning, but no longer in such a significant proportion of lessons. Notably, the quality of teaching has improved, with no unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection. However, much remains to be done in order to improve levels of attainment, especially for the few lower-and higher-attaining pupils who are not meeting their potential.

## **SCIENCE**

85. At the end of Key Stage 3 the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 or higher in the National Curriculum tests in 2000 was below the national average and below average compared with similar schools. The percentage of pupils obtaining level 6 or higher was below the national average and below the average of pupils in similar schools. In previous

years the results have been close to the national average. However, the decline in 2000 is due to the performance of boys, which fell to well below the national expectation, whilst girls maintained results close to the national figure.

86. In 2000, pupils in Year 11 were entered for GCSE examinations in double award science, single award science, and the three separate sciences – biology, chemistry and physics. Overall, the results obtained are well below the national average and well below those of similar schools. These results represent a slight improvement on the previous year, but since the last inspection, when science results matched the national average and were close to those of similar schools, there has been a steady decline in performance. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in their science GCSE examinations.

87. By the end of Key Stage 3 boys and girls have at least average understanding of life processes and living things; materials and their properties; and, physical processes. Recent improvements in the curriculum offered in Key Stage 3 have led to evidence of higher standards, but this is yet to have an effect on test and examination results. For example, ensuring that there are opportunities for pupils to describe and explain what they see and do means that pupils in a middle ability set in Year 9 are able to recognise when a displacement reaction has taken place, describe what has happened, and record the chemical reaction as a word equation. More-able pupils are using appropriate scientific language to give a detailed description of respiration and can explain the chemical changes taking place. Pupils in a low-ability set, including some with special educational needs, can explain how the crystal size in igneous rocks is affected by the rate of cooling of magma, and the reasons for the different cooling rates. Pupils' progress in developing the skills of scientific enquiry is good, particularly in Years 7 and 8 where the newly-adopted course is giving regular opportunities for the teaching of these investigative skills.

88. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards of attainment seen in lessons are broadly in line with national expectations. The restructuring of the curriculum and the adoption of a modular science GCSE course for all pupils has meant that teachers and pupils are benefiting from a much more consistent approach to the subject, leading to improved attainment. For example pupils in a middle-ability set in Year 10, having seen a demonstration of the collection of the products when a fuel is burnt, were using well-developed problem solving skills to discover the elements present in the fuel. Pupils in a low-ability set studying double award science were able to draw line graphs accurately and include a line of best fit. Pupils' progress in gaining knowledge is good, but their development of the skills of scientific enquiry is less secure. For example, although pupils can devise a fair test to find out what affects the strength of an electromagnet, a significant number cannot recognise all of the key factors that must be controlled. This underachievement in scientific enquiry is particularly evident with more-able pupils who are given too few opportunities to show initiative and make their own decisions in investigative work; the teaching approach adopted is too prescriptive and limits opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

89. Since the last inspection, the sound standards of teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils have been maintained and in some areas improved upon. The development of teaching schemes has taken place but does not describe in sufficient detail the learning that is expected of pupils. Attainment in tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE examinations has declined, and investigative work still does not allow the high attainers the opportunity to show initiative, although there are good signs in Years 7 and 8 that this is becoming more frequent. There has been very little improvement in the teaching of information communication technology, or teaching that emphasises spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues in science lessons. Assessment and recording have been developed to include a

detailed data tracking system for individual pupils. However, this is not yet informing curriculum planning for individual or groups of pupils.

90. Pupils in both key stages have a good attitude to their learning. They settle down quickly to work at the beginning of lessons. They listen well and show enthusiasm, interest and high levels of concentration in lessons. There is a very good rapport between teachers and pupils, which supports learning. Pupils are mature in their approach to their studies and respond positively. Their behaviour in lessons is nearly always good and often very good.

91. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons, with teaching in over half of lessons being good or very good. In most cases teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. This means that pupils are appropriately challenged, and they are interested in subject material because learning is related to their everyday experiences. When teaching is good, the purpose of the lesson is shared with pupils and skilled questioning is used to find out pupils' levels of understanding, to develop their learning further. Teachers regularly recap on work covered to consolidate and reinforce pupils' understanding of concepts. The activities and tasks used by teachers in lessons are carefully chosen to meet the needs of all abilities, including those pupils with special educational needs. Lessons are well organised so that pupils have appropriate access to equipment and learn how to move around laboratories safely. A particularly strong feature of many lessons is the good use of resources during demonstrations and practical work to illustrate teaching points, so consolidating pupils' understanding. Other positive features include examples of good support for the development of pupils' literacy skills, and good links between different areas of the science curriculum, as in a lesson on the formation of sedimentary rocks where the teacher related the process to gravity and energy flow in river water.

92. On the few occasions when teaching is less successful, the methods used are not appropriate and the level of work is not matched to pupils' needs. These lessons sometimes involve pupils copying written notes but without the need for them to think about, or understand, the information that is being recorded. There are some weaknesses in knowledge and understanding of the subject, when lessons are taught by non-specialists. The department is aware of these shortcomings and is arranging staff training, and is planning to reduce the imbalance of physics specialists in the staff team in future appointments. Although information and communications technology is taught through some data logging activities and the occasional science lesson using the computer network, provision in science is patchy and is insufficient to improve pupils' skills in information and communications technology.

93. The management of the department is satisfactory overall and is improving. All staff are enthusiastically committed to raising standards. The recent changes to the curriculum and its organisation in both key stages are positive developments and the benefits are already being seen. However, there are weaknesses in some departmental management processes which are likely to hamper the progress that is being made. This is particularly so with the department development plan which does not provide the strategic vision that the department needs to make the necessary improvements in order to raise the attainment of pupils. The plan does not reflect the aims of the department, include targets and success criteria showing how activities will impact on pupils' learning. It does not indicate priorities costed against available funding; or strategies to monitor and evaluate development. Monitoring of teaching and learning, evaluation and review are not sufficiently developed to highlight areas in need of improvement and to give the opportunity for good practice to be shared. There is no departmental safety policy. Although safety practices within the department are generally appropriate, there is no means by which all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Marking follows departmental guidelines, but there are few examples of comments that explain misunderstandings or offer pupils advice on their future learning.

94. The resources that are available to the department are adequate and are being used very well to enhance pupils' learning. Accommodation in the science department is unsatisfactory. Little improvement has been made since the last inspection, many of the labs are becoming worn with age, and the layout of several is not conducive to good teaching. Storage is a particular problem with some apparatus inappropriately located on open shelves in laboratories. The laboratory technicians provide very good support.

## **ART**

95. In the GCSE in 2000 the proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C grades was well above the national averages and an improvement on the 1999 results. Girls performed better than boys, reflecting the national picture. Nevertheless, the boys did very well and all pupils gained a certificate. At the time of the last inspection GCSE results were good but in the following two years they declined dramatically. There has been a substantial improvement in the last three years. Additionally, many more pupils now take the examination.

96. Overall standards achieved in art are satisfactory, and many pupils exceed expectations. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' work meets national expectations and there is a significant amount of work of a high standard counterbalanced by the below average work of the less-able artists who nevertheless strive hard to do well. There is good exploratory work in a variety of styles and media including Op Art, bas relief and the design and imaginative use of maquettes in three dimensional studies. Work in some sketchbooks is of a lower standard. Throughout the key stage pupils increase their understanding of how to develop ideas from original concepts to final forms very well. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are above average in relation to course expectations. There is now a wide range of art ability in these larger art GCSE option groups and all pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities. The portfolio work of many pupils is of a very good quality. Pupils show control over a range of media, drawing skills are good and pupils show satisfactory understanding of the work of recognised western artists. Pupils' ability to develop their ideas through research and sketches is very good. They are able to discuss their work confidently with adults. In lessons no significant difference was seen in the achievement of boys and girls.

97. The majority of the issues raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed. At Key Stage 4, craft skills have improved and large-scale observational drawing is much better. Pupils' understanding of visual research, which was judged as limited, is now well developed across the two key stages and is one of the strengths of the department's work. The number of pupils entered for GCSE was low but since the last inspection the number has increased and in 2000 twice as many were entered as in 1995. A wider range of media is studied now but not clay: the school does not have a working kiln. There is still some over-reliance on secondary source material such as pictures in books and magazines, and a small number of pupils' confidence in talking about their work remains limited. Most importantly the shortcomings seen in teaching then are certainly not evident now.

98. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good with many very good features and the very best teaching has a spiritual quality. Teachers' demonstrations are expert and the teaching of basic skills is good with proper attention being given to increasing pupils' command of technical language. Short-term planning is good enabling pupils to develop their ideas over a sequence of lessons. Teachers' methods are varied and appropriate for the task in hand and the least-able and most-able artists' needs are both well met. Class questioning is good. Relationships with pupils are cordial and supportive and the very good pupils'

behaviour is maintained by the teachers' calm and authoritative manner. Homework is set regularly and is well integrated into the lesson process so that pupils clearly understand what they have to do. Pupils receive good verbal feedback as they work. Pace in lessons is good and pupil's intellectual and creative effort is good. The quiet studio ethos created by teachers focuses pupils' concentration and is a major factor in the good quality of the learning in the department. There is excellent display of high-quality work by pupils in the main school foyer and the art area environment is lively and stimulating. There have been some very successful projects undertaken with visiting artists but visits to art galleries have lapsed and these should be reintroduced.

99. Although individual lesson planning is good, the departmental planning documentation is not well structured, is difficult to follow and has insufficient emphasis on non-western art. All pupils keep a sketchbook in which most homework is done. This is good practice, but the current marking policy within sketchbooks is inappropriate and should be revised. There is a close working relationship between the two members of the teaching staff which results in the smooth day-to-day running of the department, however a more positive lead could be taken in promoting the department's achievements. Resources are generally adequate but the computer facilities are very limited which restricts opportunities for using information technology in art.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. At the end of Key Stage 3 the teachers' assessment of pupils performance is much the same for all aspects of technology, with 65 per cent reaching the expected level 5 or above and 50 per cent going on to the higher level 6. This compares well with design and technology in other schools and with other subjects in this school.

101. Taking all of the design and technology courses at GCSE together, 55 per cent of pupils achieved passes at grade C or above in the 2000 examinations. This was higher than the results achieved in 1999 and met the department's targets. Results have risen significantly over the last few years. In 1999 results were above the national average and overall pupils did better in design and technology than in many other subjects in the school. However, there is considerable variation in pupils' performances in the five different GCSE courses that are offered by the department. Results are highest in food technology where over 70 percent of pupils gained grade C or above in 2000; this was also achieved by over 60 percent of pupils in textiles and in graphical products; by 50 percent of pupils in systems and control, but by fewer than 30 percent of pupils on the resistant materials course. These variations are partly explained by the previous attainment of pupils who choose the different courses; for example 80 per cent of the pupils taking the food technology course gained the expected level 5 or better at the end of Key Stage 3 where as fewer than 40 percent of the pupils taking the resistant materials course reached this level. However, results could be higher in resistant materials if there were higher expectations of pupils' performance, particularly in their design work.

102. At Key Stage 3 pupils follow two distinct courses, one covering food and textiles, the other resistant materials, graphics, electronics and other aspects of technology. Overall, standards attained by pupils are in line with expectations. In all of these areas pupils become confident in handling the equipment and develop appropriate skills. For example, they learn to thread and operate a sewing machine early in the key stage and are thoroughly independent in using the control operations by the time they are in Year 9. Independence is stressed in all aspects of the subject and pupils respond well, getting tools and materials for themselves and organising their work. Design work is involved to varying degrees in the

different projects the pupils follow. They develop a reasonable grasp of the process, but this is not as strong as it should be because of differences in approach in the two areas.

103. The range of results at GCSE are reflected in the quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection. In food technology, textiles and graphical products, pupils work carefully and produce good quality outcomes supported by well-produced, thoughtful design work which is recorded in their folders. Most pupils in these areas are working at levels higher than normally expected for their age and are likely to achieve higher grades at GCSE. Some of the work in each area is outstanding, for example, the design work for pop-up books in graphical products, the design and execution of a party outfit in textiles and of meal plans in the food area. Pupils following the system and control course develop a sound grasp of the applications of electronic circuits and some have sufficient understanding of how the circuits work to be able to adapt them for different purposes. The products they make work well and some have a good quality of finish. Overall, attainment in this course is above average. In the resistant materials course there is considerably more emphasis on construction than design and folders are often poorly presented and give little evidence of the way ideas have been developed. Design work is often not well recorded in pupils' folders, particularly the reasons why decisions have been taken and consideration of how technological as opposed to aesthetic improvements have been made. The quality of construction is better, particularly where pupils have been able to benefit from the use of power tools and techniques such as vacuum forming, but work involving hand tools is often not accurate enough. Teachers could raise the quality of learning by paying more attention to these aspects.

104. Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers know their own branch of the subject thoroughly and demonstrate their skills well. Relationships with pupils are often very good, pupils respond positively to the teachers' approaches and behaviour is generally very good in lessons. Lessons often include demonstrations of techniques and procedures. These are clear and helpful and in the most successful cases are followed up by individual support for pupils as they are practising them. In some cases pupils are not corrected when they use tools incorrectly and they develop sloppy techniques. This happens most often in the resistant materials area. Practical work is organised effectively and there is a good emphasis on safety and hygiene in almost all lessons. Planning is supported by the schemes of work and some teachers are identifying objectives for individual lessons, which helps them focus their teaching more effectively. Pupils respond well in lessons. They concentrate and generally work well, although the rate of work tends to fall off for younger pupils towards the end of double periods. Pupils often help each other with their work, sometimes suggesting design ideas, assisting with a technique or reminding each other when something has been forgotten.

105. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, particularly in the craft, design and technology area where at times it was unsatisfactory. This, and the pupils' positive response, has been a major factor in helping the department improve its examination results over the last few years. Documentation has been strengthened so that there is greater clarity about what pupils are to be taught. Unfortunately, this is still divided into two strands: food and textiles, the other resistant materials, graphics, electronics and other aspects of technology, and although pupils follow the same courses at Key Stage 3 they get somewhat different messages from the two parts of the department. These include different approaches to written work, the design process and to the practice of skills, the environments are also very different as are procedural issues, such as the attitude to protective clothing. All of these contribute to pupils' views of the different aspects of the subject and strongly influence the choices they make when they move into Key Stage 4.

## GEOGRAPHY

106. The proportion of pupils who were assessed by their teachers as having attained National Curriculum level 5 or higher at the end of Key Stage 3 was above the national average in 2000 and was higher than in 1999. Pupils' results in the GCSE examination in 1999 were above the national average on all measures and a very high proportion of pupils gained the highest grades of A and A\*. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C has been above average in each of the last three years and has improved more than in schools nationally. Pupils' grades in geography were above the average of those gained in their other subjects and above those of pupils in other schools with similar attainment levels at the end of Key Stage 3. The results in the most recent examination in 2000 were similar to those in the previous year.

107. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment is a little above that expected nationally for their ages by the end of Key Stage 3 and above expectations by the end of Key Stage 4. A higher proportion of pupils than that nationally achieve the standard expected for the course at Key Stage 4 and many exceed it. At both key stages, pupils' achieve standards above what would have been expected from their earlier attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at Key Stage 3 and the highest-attaining pupils make especially good progress at Key Stage 4. Most pupils at both key stages draw good, neat maps and diagrams and have good knowledge of geographical terms. At Key Stage 4, most have good knowledge and many good understanding of changing industrial patterns, and of the causes and effects of population change and urbanisation. Most pupils in Year 9 know that tourism may both benefit and harm communities, and higher attainers understand that this may give rise to conflicting attitudes to developments.

108. A notable feature of the work in the subject is the high standard achieved and progress made by pupils at both key stages in geographical investigations, both at first hand through fieldwork and by the use of evidence in books, photographs and other sources. This is because their skills and understanding are progressively and systematically developed from their first term in school. Pupils in Year 7 carry out simple, but effective investigations into the factors affecting temperatures in different parts of the school site and describe their findings using appropriate geographical terms. By Year 9, pupils of all levels of attainment make competent surveys of land use and environmental quality in work on National Parks, present their findings effectively using maps and graphs and analyse their results. Most present appropriate, reasoned conclusions, and these are often coherently argued by higher-attaining pupils. In GCSE coursework in Year 11, pupils often use a wide range of methods well to present information, including information technology, relate their findings to theories of urban geography, and evaluate their evidence and methods effectively. The standard of work, including that by some pupils with special educational needs, is high, and sometimes outstanding.

109. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection has been good. There has been a substantial increase in the number of pupils taking the subject at GCSE and a good improvement in boys' as well as overall results. The high quality of teaching, curriculum provision and management recorded in the last report has been maintained and the department continues to demonstrate a strong and shared commitment to raising standards. Its capacity to secure further improvement is good.

110. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good at both key stages, and often very good. The great majority of pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are interested, concentrate well and try hard. As a result, they use their time productively and are able to make good progress in their work. It is an indication of



pupils' enjoyment of the subject and the effectiveness of the teaching that three out of four Year 9 pupils choose to take geography at Key Stage 4 and a high proportion go on to study it at GCE A level at local colleges.

111. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, and pupils learn well and make good progress as a result. Teaching is good, sometimes very good, in the great majority of lessons at both key stages and is never less than satisfactory. Support staff also make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress in some lessons at Key Stage 3. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this enables them to use questions and well-chosen examples effectively to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Their expertise is demonstrated particularly well by the effectiveness with which they prepare pupils of all levels of attainment for the demands of the GCSE examinations. Teachers manage classes well and their relationships with pupils are nearly always good. This creates a constructive atmosphere in which pupils learn effectively. Teachers plan well and use a good range of teaching methods and materials that challenge pupils but are well matched to their differing needs. As a result, gains in geographical skills, knowledge and understanding are high for pupils of all ages and levels of prior attainment.

112. The most effective learning occurs when, with encouragement and support, pupils respond well to their teachers' very high expectations of them. This was seen in a lesson in Year 10 on the problems that immigrants into the United Kingdom may face. Pupils responded very positively and responsibly to the challenge of preparing and delivering group presentations and made very good progress in understanding the issues. In a Year 7 class, pupils with special educational needs were able to make very good progress in using information from climate maps to decide on the most appropriate resort for a holiday because the class teacher and learning support staff shared the same high expectations and worked very well together to challenge and support pupils.

113. The strong geography team is led very effectively and creates a positive ethos for learning and a stimulating environment in classrooms. However, a few teachers work in too many different rooms. Pupils receive a very broad and well-balanced experience of the subject, especially at Key Stage 3, and this makes a good contribution to their moral, social and cultural development. Information from the analysis of GCSE results is used well to guide curricular planning, but the monitoring of teaching is not yet sufficiently systematic. The subject is well resourced with books and materials to support the learning of pupils of all levels of attainment.

## **HISTORY**

114. The proportion of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 5 and above in 2000 was above the national average, an improvement on the results of 1999 when standards were broadly in line with national expectations. The attainment of girls was higher than that of boys. At Key Stage 4, the proportions of pupils gaining grades A\*-C and grades A\*-G were above average. Results have improved in each of the last three years. Boys perform at national expectations but girls' achievement is significantly higher than this.

115. Standards of work at Key Stage 3 are in line with national expectations. At the end of the key stage, pupils of all abilities have developed their historical knowledge and understanding. They can distinguish between fact and opinion and can extract information from a range of historical sources. Pupils show considerable empathy with people in the past. More-able pupils evaluate historical sources and use them critically. Pupils of different abilities organize their work and produce writing of an appropriate standard using

correct historical terminology. By the end of Key Stage 4 attainment is above average. Pupils are able to select and deploy historical information and organize it in extended writing at a standard appropriate to their ability. Written work is of an above average standard and is well presented. Pupils of different abilities develop the necessary skills to compare, interpret and evaluate historical sources at an appropriate level. The standard of oral work in lessons is good.

116. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in attainment in both key stages. This improvement is particularly noticeable in GCSE results. Since the last inspection, the department has made progress in improving the range of learning resources for both higher and lower attaining pupils. It has also produced a clear plan to develop the use of information technology in history lessons, though this has plan yet to be fully implemented.

117. The standard of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well planned with clear aims although these are not always made clear to the pupils. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject and their explanations are accurate, lively and accessible to pupils of different abilities. Teachers make good use of a range of resources and of a variety of teaching methods which allow pupils of all abilities to learn. In one Year 7 lesson, low-attaining pupils gained an insight into the reality of the Battle of Hastings when one of the class was dressed in Norman armour. In a Year 10 lesson, G.C.S.E. students used a collection of First World War posters to develop their understanding of propaganda techniques used during wartime. Teachers are particularly systematic in teaching historical concepts and terminology, as in a Year 7 lesson on the Romans and a Year 8 lesson on Mary, Queen of Scots. Homework is set regularly and supports learning. In some lessons, clear links are made with past and future learning. In their specialist rooms, staff have created a stimulating and attractive environment which encourages pupils to learn. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour in their lessons. Pupils' work is marked regularly according to an agreed departmental policy. There is a well-established profiling system which monitors pupils' progress and enables pupils to set targets to improve their own work. At Key Stage 4 effective use is made of teachers' comments to help pupils improve the quality and depth of their written work, though this is less evident at Key Stage 3. The department has started to make use of performance data to set targets for individuals at Key Stage 4 but pupils are sometimes not clear about their targets and their progress towards them.

118. The quality of learning in both key stages is good. Pupils show a lively interest in their work and they sustain concentration throughout their lessons. Pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress, with support where appropriate. There is a very constructive relationship between staff and their classes and pupils work well together. Boys and girls contribute equally to lessons. There is a consistently high standard of behaviour.

119. The department is very well managed. There is a clear sense of direction and a shared commitment to improving standards. The history staff work effectively as a team. The department is well resourced with books and audio-visual materials, reflecting good financial management. There is a very good programme of visits and fieldwork to support the history curriculum and effective use is made of local history to illustrate national developments. Each of these factors makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

120. The GCSE results in 2000 were a slight improvement on the results for 1999 which were below average for pupils achieving A\*-C but above for pupils achieving the A\*-G grades. Results in the three previous years were below the national average but there has been a slight upward trend. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 showed attainment below the national average. Inspection evidence showed standards in line with expectations. The contributory reason for this improvement is the increased separate teaching of ICT for Year 9 pupils and information and communications technology, (ICT) across the curriculum.

121. In lessons and in work seen, the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the expected standard. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with limited knowledge, but with the benefit of a well-structured programme of work to establish key skills, by the time pupils reach Year 9 they have acquired satisfactory knowledge in most of the strands of the National Curriculum. Pupils have some knowledge of control technology, using a commercial program but this element is underdeveloped and is overall unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 develop their knowledge of databases and are able to search for information. Although they understand its use and can search for information quickly their knowledge of database use in a wider context is limited. Pupils in Year 9 are confident users of the word processing application. They are familiar with the main functions of the keyboard, change the style and size of the lettering, use the 'cut and paste' facility to edit their work and add art graphics, adjusting the size to fit their publication. Pupils are gaining knowledge of a spreadsheet, using the formulas to calculate simple mathematical calculations. The school is not yet 'on line' consequently pupils' knowledge of e-mail and research using the internet is limited. Standards of attainment have been maintained since the previous inspection.

122. The overall standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average but satisfactory for those pupils studying GCSE. The main reason for this low attainment is that not all the pupils during the key stage have the benefit of regular access to ICT. However, this has been partially remedied with the introduction of a key skills course for pupils in Year 10 with plans to extend to Year 11 and the increased access for use across the curriculum. Examination pupils are confident with a range of programs. Using a spreadsheet they are able to model a situation, for example in a topic, 'evacuating a building', pupils entered the appropriate information and used formulas provided to calculate how long it would take to evacuate a building during an emergency, and presented their findings in graph form. Pupils develop a clear understanding of the use of ICT for communication. Their knowledge of word processing is good, using the 'mail merge' facility for letters and producing publications with added art graphics. They have sound knowledge of the use of a database. This was used effectively in their 'Aqua Club' project, for example creating fields and entering details of the members. Pupils with special educational needs are often linked with more capable pupils during lessons and generally make good progress. Pupils in Year 10 who have benefited from the key skills course are developing their knowledge; using a range of applications they are familiar with spreadsheets, reviewing formulas and adding graphics to their word-processed publications.

123. The provision for ICT across the curriculum was judged to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection. There has been some improvement with this issue with the benefit of increased hardware. The recent appointment of the ICT promoter to support teachers in subject areas and to promote the use of ICT across the curriculum is having a positive effect. Subject areas have identified the need to develop the use of ICT across the curriculum, using computers to enhance learning but some subjects are still underdeveloped. Areas of good practice are in geography, using CD ROM's for investigation and in music to aid composition skills. Other subjects using some ICT are science for data logging, word processing in English and modern foreign languages to support lower-attaining pupils, control technology in maths and simulation work in history. ICT is less well developed in other subjects; in art it is

unsatisfactory. Unfortunately much of the development to extend the use of ICT has come to a temporary halt following fire damage.

124. The quality of teaching overall is good, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and understanding and use this effectively to demonstrate skills well, resulting in pupils being quickly on task and contributing well to their learning. All lessons start well with a good recap on previous work and clear explanation of the task. Learning is better when all pupils are involved in question and answer sessions. This practice, however, is not consistent and there are occasions when teachers fail to include all pupils, resulting in a slow response to questioning and lack of understanding. Lessons are well planned to develop pupils' skills, but there are occasions when the content is too prescriptive, preventing independent enquiry and lacking in challenge for the higher attainers. Worksheets support learning for the majority of pupils, building progressively on previous knowledge and promoting their skills, however some of the vocabulary is complex and is unsuitable for pupils with literacy difficulties. Teachers have very good discipline, insisting on quiet when explaining a procedure, leading to good learning. Learning is most effective when pupils are given clear objectives at the beginning of the session, frequent stops to ascertain progress, combined with time targets and a plenary at the end of the lesson to assess pupils understanding. Teaching is less effective where teachers tend to over instruct and provide too few opportunities for pupils to learn for themselves. In these lessons questioning of pupils' understanding is limited, resulting in pupils being unsure of the task and leading to slow progress and learning. The quality of teaching has improved overall since the previous inspection.

125. The head of department is well organised and the management of the subject is satisfactory overall. Teaching has not been monitored and the development of the subject would benefit with the sharing of expertise and approaches. The future development of the subject would also benefit with a closer liaison with subject heads of departments and the ICT coordinator reviewing the present schemes of work to meet the needs of departments with subject-related topics that support pupils' learning. The appointment of a ICT promoter, the increased hard and software to meet the needs of ICT across the curriculum, together with the proposed additional time to teach ICT as an independent subject are positive developments intended to raise standards.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

126. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, pupils' attainment was below average overall, although a significant proportion of pupils obtained the higher levels. This was an improvement on the 1999 results. In 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE A\*-C grades in French was below the national average but was an improvement on the previous three years, and reflects a larger number of pupils taking the examination. The gap in girls' performance (46 per cent) and boys' performance (18.5 per cent) was wider than national figures. The percentage of pupils gaining A\*-G was in line with the national average. In German, A\*-C grades were above the national average, as they have been for the previous 4 years; A\*-G grades were in line with the national average. In Latin, for which there are no national figures, the results were good; 60 per cent of the pupils gained A\*-C grades and 87 per cent gained A\*-G.

127. By the end of Key Stage 3 in the lessons seen, standards in French are broadly average. In German, standards are above average as only the high attaining linguists now follow a German course. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are average overall in French and German, but range from above average to below average. Attainment is above average in Latin. Able pupils are taught well and appropriately challenging work raises attainment. A

small minority of low-attaining pupils in Year 9 do not reach high enough standards because of a lack of teacher control and reluctance on the pupils' part to speak in French. However, many pupils have confident speaking skills and standards for the higher-attaining pupils are appropriate. Listening is a strong skill. Pupils listen well to each other, they enjoy presenting role-plays and listen carefully to the performance. The standard of reading is average and there are opportunities for pupils to read at greater length and for pleasure but this skill needs further development. Standards of writing are average, and above average for high-attaining pupils. Writing is much improved because of the decision to take the writing coursework option at GCSE: there is good evidence of drafting and re-drafting and a heightened understanding of grammar and accuracy.

128. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Presentation and content of work have improved and there is greater interest and involvement in learning. Marking of work is consistent and the match of work to pupils' needs is generally appropriate. Reading resources have improved but there is still insufficient use of information and communications technology. Pupils still need to speak the language more spontaneously and the accommodation in mobile classrooms remains poor, although the latter has no discernible negative effect on learning standards.

129. Teaching of all three languages in Key Stage 3 is good overall, with teaching in a very small number of lessons unsatisfactory and in a similar number very good. At Key Stage 4 it is good with a small proportion very good. Teaching generally meets the needs of all pupils. Teachers know their languages well but there is insufficient use of French and German in some lessons. There is also too great an emphasis on analysing language rather than using it. Planning is good with clear language objectives and this is a strength of the department. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, activities are well sequenced and the use of the overhead projector and audio cassette is effective. Special needs support in a Year 7 class is good with the support teacher and the support assistant giving knowledgeable and effective help to pupils whilst working well with the class teacher.

130. Pupils' learning is mostly good at both key stages and occasionally very good at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, pupils learning is occasionally unsatisfactory. Pupils make good progress in all three languages because there is usually intensive practice of vocabulary and language structure, which lays down a secure foundation for future learning. Pupils made good progress in a Year 8 French class when they were encouraged to describe family members, giving name, age, personality traits, and relationships, extending their response from one phrase to several sentences, and in a Year 10 class in German in which they were writing extended descriptions of friends. In Latin, high-attaining pupils made good progress by using their previously learned language and their annotated text to produce a good English translation of Latin poetry. Pupils are involved physically, as exemplified by a year 8 class of pupils who used their arms, legs and bodies to practise moving ahead, turn right and left. However, a few lower-attaining pupils in both key stages do not make satisfactory progress in French because they lack concentration, and have insufficient practice to establish the language appropriately.

131. Assessment of pupils' progress and marking are carried out well. There is a common purpose in the department with all languages using a similar methodology. This is a good department, which works well together and gives enhanced provision to higher-attaining linguists who have access to three languages and an extra German class at a local specialist languages school.

## **MUSIC**

132. Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 exceed expectations. In the teacher's assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2000, the great majority of pupils match or exceed expectations and a small proportion not reaching the expected standard. This level of attainment is above the national average. Girls do somewhat better than boys, as is the case nationally. This high standard is confirmed by inspection evidence from observation of lessons and analysis of previous work. Pupils in Years 7 understand standard rhythmic notation and use it to perform ensemble pieces of four different lines. They interpret 'graphic' notation vocally with imagination, and respond well to listening, recalling previous experiences to identify instruments and moods. In singing, pitching is a problem for some, boys in particular. Pupils in Year 8 use keyboards competently to compose melodies according to given patterns. They demonstrate their knowledge of technical terms for concepts learned earlier. Appraisal of music heard, in written form, has developed so that whole sentences are more commonly used. By Year 9, composition is with given chords, pupils playing their work or using a computer to do this. Music writing is mostly accurate and legible, two clefs being used by some. Pupils perform their work confidently, including some with special educational needs. While standards of work in Year 9 are above average, and pupils achieve well because of the good teaching, higher standards are not achieved because the continuity of lessons is broken by timetable arrangements that have the subject taught every other half term. In addition, some pupils in Year 9 did not have specialist teaching in Years 7 and 8. Progress in understanding and skills is thus interrupted twice, and therefore limited.

133. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards of attainment are broadly average. GCSE results in 1999 were higher than those for other schools nationally, as measured by the proportion of pupils gaining A\*- C grades. The results from the examination in 2000 show a fall from this high standard, coinciding with a big increase in the number choosing the subject, many choosing from interest rather than from having a particular strength in the subject. The attainment of the current Year 11 group of twelve pupils, mostly boys, is broadly average. While they can become absorbed in preparation of their performances and compositions, some using computers, few show the interest or dedication demanded. They are not strongly represented in the school's performing groups. Some have difficulty recalling basic terms for the listening paper. However, the current Year 10 group of eighteen, again mostly boys, are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Most are supported by instrumental tuition, mainly in school, and are involved in music making beyond the classroom. The attainment of these pupils exceeds expectations at this stage of the course. This is in spite of the fact that half of the group attend after school tuition voluntarily.

134. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 have improved. In Years 7 and 8, curriculum coverage is now good and there is no longer any lack of variety in lesson content. Indeed, this and the schemes and plans are now a strength at both key stages. Standards at Key Stage 4 are less consistent, due to the increased numbers of pupils choosing to follow the subject. Extra-curricular work in music remains very good. There is now a second music teacher, and a team of instrumental teachers has been maintained and improved. However, the cost of lessons means fewer pupils and parents take these. Management in music is now a strength, with documentation in place and opportunities for computer-aided work in music pursued. Assessment, recording and reporting is secure, using computer technology. Accommodation for music, criticised at the last inspection, has become a very serious limitation on the progress of current pupils and on necessary developments. Six periods, including Year 11, have to take place in non-specialist rooms, with only portable equipment. Shortage of space lies behind the halving of curriculum time in Year 9. Both class and instrumental lessons suffer from sound and disturbance from each other. Storage space is inadequate. When there are school examinations, 'silent' music lessons are imposed on work in the one satisfactory and all-purpose music room.

135. Teaching in music is good at both key stages, an overall judgement reflecting a range from satisfactory to excellent. Teachers show energy and enthusiasm, which is most often caught by the pupils. At its best, teaching is at a pace which is challenging and exciting to all, yet ensures no pupil is confused. The good standard of planning and preparation almost always shows high expectations from all, with expected outcomes made clear to pupils and different tasks provided for the most and least able. Humour, encouragement and praise ensure good relationships. Teachers emphasise the main points for learning effectively, using a rich variety of resources, including computers, microphones and their own written materials. They use their subject knowledge and skills in ways which enable pupils to learn enjoyably. Teaching ensures that pupils are aware of their progress and targets, and pays proper attention to the needs of individuals. Where teaching is not at the highest standard, it does not match the pace of a lesson to the reactions and mood of the class. Insufficient attention is given to using music sometimes for spiritual development, in common with the other arts, rather than concentrating only on how it works. Teachers foster as much extra-curricular work as they can manage. It is usual for there to be a choir or instrumental ensemble, or pupils using resources or practising, before and after school and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The band plays during assembly every morning and rehearses twice a week. The area has an atmosphere of a club, the hub of the school for many pupils.

136. Music is very successful at Northfield and plays an important part in pupils' learning and personal development. The curriculum is enriched through visits to the school by a string quartet, military band and a steel band workshop, and by pupils performing and listening, both in the local region and further afield. Resources are developing. There is still a need for more classroom percussion and for upgrading keyboards. The accommodation is inadequate for the subject to the extent that standards are threatened. Improvements are urgent if pupils' entitlement is to be ensured and staff morale preserved.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

137. The standards achieved by pupils in the GCSE examination in 2000 were well above the national average, continuing the pattern of results from 1999. There was no examination course offered at the time of the last inspection. There has been a consistent improvement in results over the past three years, with no noticeable difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

138. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are average overall, across the range of activities observed. Many of these activities have been recently introduced into the curriculum as part of the Sports College initiative. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards are above those expected in trampolining and in line with standards expected in table tennis. Pupils in Year 7 demonstrate standards in hockey, which are above those expected. Dance, trampolining and table tennis have been introduced into the curriculum this term as part of the sports college initiative. Standards in dance are below those expected but this is explained by pupils' lack of previous experience. However, in the extra-curricular dance club, standards exceed expectations; Year 7 pupils understand the principles of constructing a motif, perform a group dance to music with sensitivity, and show good space awareness. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards in GCSE theory are in line with those expected; where pupils in Year 11 have a good knowledge and understanding of the principles of training in sport. In Year 10, all pupils study a GCSE course. Standards are broadly as expected at this stage of the course, and although standards achieved by low attaining pupils are below those expected, these pupils make very good progress. In these lessons pupils from a local special school are positively integrated and have a sound knowledge and understanding of how to control a football with different parts of the body. Standards in trampolining in Year 10 are well below those expected because pupils have only experienced a short time on the activity, some

being timid when bouncing. Nevertheless, the progress made by pupils in the short time they have been experiencing this activity has been good.

139. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages, with over three quarters of the teaching being good or very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. These good standards of teaching have been maintained in line with the observations of the previous inspection. All teachers are enthusiastic in their teaching and are committed to good standards. In the best lesson, pupils are challenged to produce high standards and good use is made of demonstration. This was evident in a trampoline lesson where pupils in Year 8 linked new learning of a seat drop to produce a routine of five bounces of an above-average standard. Opportunities were given to all pupils to practise and refine their work. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. In dance lessons, pupils linked movements on a sporting theme of cricket into a motif and, despite limited experience, most pupils made good progress. Planning for the needs of less-able pupils is not always sufficiently specific, but in gymnastics and dance open-ended tasks allow these pupils to make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. In a GCSE theory lesson on skill acquisition, pupils in Year 10 were unable to recall previous learning. Despite the enthusiastic efforts of the teacher, pupils' acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the topic was below average. In all lessons teachers have formed very good relationships with their pupils and this is a strength of the department.

140. The attitudes of pupils at both key stages are generally very good, and sometimes excellent; they are rarely unsatisfactory. Pupils appreciate the extensive facilities and the status of the school as a sports college. They arrive enthusiastically for lessons and there are few non-participants. Behaviour is often of a very high standard. Pupils listen intently to instructions and work hard in the majority of lessons. In partner and group work, pupils work cooperatively and many support each other. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer to pupils, available before school, during lunch times and after school. There is a high participation at all of these activities and a strong commitment by staff to organising and running them.

141. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced although six week units are too short for pupils to make the required progress throughout the key stage, especially in dance and gymnastics. Some pupils in Year 9 also lose one period each week to German and this has implications for equality of access and opportunity and the assessment of pupils at the end of the key stage. This also occurs at Key Stage 4 where pupils who study Latin also lose a lesson and therefore do not have full access to the GCSE course. This timetabling issue has been resolved for September 2001. At present all pupils in Year 10 study the GCSE course; this is the only form of accreditation available for pupils.

142. The leadership and management are good and the director of physical education is committed to high standards. Monitoring of teaching occurs and this helps to maintain and improve the standard of teaching. The appointment of a full-time table tennis coach has contributed to improving standards and her involvement in lessons and in extra-curricular activities has proved to be an asset to the school. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but reports to parents do not indicate what pupils know, understand and can do. There is a strong involvement with the community and positive use is made of the sporting facilities. Effective links are in place with the local hockey club and the Stockton and District Table Tennis League is now based at the school. The school is involved in a wide range of inter-school sport and has achieved much success in a number of sports, most notably cricket, basketball, football, hockey and table tennis. Many pupils have gained individual success at national, county and district level in a large range of sports, and this is a credit to the school.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

143. The results in the 2000 short course GCSE examination at grades A\*-C were above the national average and showed a significant improvement on the 1999 results. All pupils obtained a pass at grades A\*-G in 2000. From 1998 the number of pupils entered for the examination has risen from 81 to 119. The number of girls taking the examination has increased from 57 to 72, whilst the number of boys has almost doubled, from 24 to 47. The gap in attainment between boys and girls has become significantly large over recent years; girls perform better than boys. However, with a time allocation which is less than that recommended by the examination board, the attainment of all pupils is noteworthy and reflects their sustained efforts and the skill and enthusiasm of their teachers.

144. The school also offers pupils a full course GCSE. In 2000 the results were well below the national average. Since the number of entrants has remained small over recent years, the school has withdrawn the course.

145. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is above average. They have a good knowledge of selected aspects of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism, such as important persons, worship, religious books, the use of symbolism, rites of passage and basic beliefs. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because of the help given in class by teachers who match tasks to their needs.

146. It is not possible to report on the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, because the provision of religious education in Year 11 (only 5 or 6 lessons towards the end of the academic year), does not meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This was an issue at the last inspection. Up to the end of Year 10, statutory requirements are met and the religious education programme is in line with the Stockton Agreed Syllabus. Pupils in Year 10 are producing work which, at this stage in their coverage of the GCSE syllabus, is satisfactory. They learn about ethical and religious issues, such as marriage and the family, the nature of belief, the roles of men and women in societies and issues of life and death, for example, abortion and euthanasia.

147. The teaching is good at Key Stage 3 and in two lessons it was very good, an improvement since the last inspection report. At Key Stage 4 teaching is at least satisfactory and in one lesson it was good. Most of the teaching is carried out by two religious education specialists, but non-specialists also make a sound contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of all pupils. Lessons are well planned to ensure that time is effectively used to advance pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils are expected to behave well and work hard. Clear objectives, explanations and instructions, together with the use of stimulating learning resources and questions are effective in arousing pupils' interest and challenging their thinking. For example, in a lesson in Year 7 on the use of symbolism in Judaism, the teacher used artefacts, skilful questioning and discussion and the use of good quality worksheets to help pupils to understand the meaning of symbolism and concepts such as slavery and freedom. A variety of interestingly presented tasks also arouses interest and facilitates learning. For example, in a Year 10 class on voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia, pupils discussed a variety of responses to euthanasia, viewed a video containing some disturbing images of human suffering, extracted information from the video and used it to complete tasks from a worksheet. Pupils with special educational needs were also able to cope with the challenges in the lesson. The management of pupils is good and teachers create an orderly environment to maximise pupils' learning opportunities. Homework is regularly set and is viewed as a purposeful activity to deepen pupils' understanding. Further development is needed in teachers' use of assessment data and in

target-setting as strategies to raise attainment. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils, create a positive learning ethos and successfully raise the self-esteem of pupils.

148. Pupils' attitude to learning is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. They usually listen to teachers and to each other well. Many sustain concentration well and co-operate sensibly in group work. Differing viewpoints, beliefs and practices are respected as seen in a Year 10 lesson on abortion where contrasting views were strongly expressed. Behaviour is generally good and the few minor cases of silly behaviour are quickly and quietly dealt with. The majority of pupils willingly talk about their work and treat visitors courteously. Displays of pupils' work, learning resources and classroom furniture are treated with respect. Though pupils' attitudes to work vary, many at Key Stage 3 are keen to do well. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and, at Key Stage 3, good progress. Learning takes place in an atmosphere conducive to work and concentration.

149. The head of department gives good academic and professional leadership. Staff are committed to the subject and to the raising of standards by sharing good practice, by being mutually supportive and engaging in professional development. The roles and relationship between religious education and guidance in the curriculum need to be reviewed and clarified. The lack of formal monitoring of teaching in the department is a weakness. Religious education makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The department's programme of visits to places of religious and cultural interest and visitors from different religious backgrounds, who meet pupils in school, enhance pupils' knowledge of religions and cultures.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

150. By the end of Key Stage 4 the standard of attainment in business education is below the national average. This trend of below-average attainment has continued in recent years. Boys have been marginally more successful than girls in achieving higher grades despite a growing number of girls choosing the subject as an option since the last inspection.

151. The standard of teaching in business education is good, because it is taught by two senior and experienced teachers, neither of whom is a subject specialist. However, they plan their lessons carefully, have high expectations of pupils and have formed good relationships with pupils.

152. Pupils have a good attitude towards learning in business education. They are well behaved, co-operative and show interest in the subject. Boys are more confident than girls when expressing their understanding of business concepts, such as marketing, sole trader and consumer rights issues, whereas girls tended to be passive, particularly in question-and-answer sessions within lessons. However, the written work of girls is better than that of boys, revealing a depth of understanding of business knowledge that is lacking in the boys' writing.

153. Since the last inspection there has been little progress in access and use of information and communications technology facilities. Accommodation continues to be a problem owing to the lack of a specialist classroom available for the subject