

INSPECTION REPORT

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Crosby, Liverpool

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104961

Headteacher: Mr. J. Summerfield

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th October 2000

Inspection number: 223890

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mgr. John Furnival
Date of previous inspection:	1 st December 1994

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart Catholic High School is a popular, 11-18 mixed, voluntary aided, comprehensive school. It is larger than average, with 1 303 pupils on roll. This includes over 200 students in the sixth form. Almost all pupils are white and most are Catholic and live locally. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The overall attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Pupils behave very well and have very good attitudes to learning. The good progress made by pupils is a result of both their own efforts and the good teaching they receive. Overall, the standard of pupils' work is consistently well above national averages at the end of Year 9, in GCSE examinations and at A level. The leadership and management of the school is very good. The school spends more money than average on each pupil, but is on a split site that raises costs. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' make very good progress in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4.
- The literacy of those pupils who have some reading difficulties is substantially improved.
- Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good.
- Progress in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is substantial.

What could be improved

- Accommodation and resources for physical education, the sixth form, design and technology and science.
- Computer data connections between the two school sites and computer facilities at the Lower School.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1994. Since then pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has increased at a rate greater than the national trend. Standards at Key Stage 4 have also increased but at a rate lower than the national trend. Standards in post 16 examinations have fluctuated but have remained at least above average whilst the numbers in the sixth form have more than doubled. The issues identified in the last report are a little dated but the Key Stage 4 curriculum is now better and options carefully organised. More detailed information is provided to pupils about post 16 opportunities available to them. There are some substantial opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, for example paired reading and support in computer lessons. The quality of accommodation has improved but much more needs to be done to support any substantial further increase in standards or a larger sixth form. Equal opportunities for pupils are now well entrenched in the curriculum and school life. The roles of middle and senior managers are now more substantial and involve effective evaluation of teaching and learning. The use of information technology and the use of libraries have substantially improved. More improvement is still required. Overall, the improvement in the school since the time of the last inspection is good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE

and A-level/AS-level examinations.

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

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

Overall Key Stage 3 test results in 1999 were very high compared those in similar schools. The trend of improvement over the previous four years has been faster than the gradually rising national trend, with the rise in girls' results being faster. Girls do much better than boys in English.

GCSE standards in the range A* - C, in 1999, are above average compared to schools with similar Year 9 test results. Over the previous four years trends have fluctuated, but the number of pupils who get 5 GCSE results in the range A*-G has improved significantly. Improvements, across the grades, have continued in 2000. In 1999, GCSE results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were above average. Spanish, drama, history and geography were well above average. Art and design technology (resistant materials) fell to well below average but these rose again in 2000. Overall, girls did better than boys.

The average points score of qualifications taken post 16 have gone up regularly until 1999 and were then well above average. Results in Year 2000 show the average points scores dipping. That particular group of pupils did better than expected at Key Stage 4, following particularly hard work by the school, as the last inspection identified them as relatively weak when in Year 8. The evidence, in this inspection, is that sixth form standards are again well above average.

The schools' examination targets are appropriate and are gradually raising the standards of pupils' work.

The standard of work seen during the inspection is good overall and very good in the sixth form, particularly geography folder work and Spanish and French. Standards of work in a theatre studies lesson were outstanding. In science, at Key Stage 3, pupils' standards in attainment target 1, *investigation*, is a more appropriate standard in Year 7 than in 8 or 9. This is due to the influence of the new National Curriculum.

Pupils' achievement is consistently good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like the school, treat it with respect and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Often exemplary to and from lessons, at breaks and in study areas. Pupils' movement between sites is quick and sensible.
Personal development and relationships	Very good, both relationships between each other and with staff. Pupils show a high level of maturity. Sixth form students support staff and pupils in their work and provide excellent role models.
Attendance	Very good, better than national. Punctuality is very good too.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

53 lessons were observed during the inspection. 94 percent were satisfactory or better. 20 percent were very good or better. Six percent were less than satisfactory. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is generally good in both Key Stages 3 and 4 with English comparatively stronger, as there are a higher proportion of very good lessons. Some science teaching shows too little planning or pays insufficient attention to the range of pupils' abilities.

In many lessons, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the work in hand, their management of pupils, and the quality of homework are strengths. Some teachers use classroom assistants very effectively and pupils gain additional support to raise the standards of their work. Other teachers do not use assistants well enough. Sixth form students provide effective, voluntary, support in some lessons.

The best lessons engaged all pupils, provided a variety of work for the range of abilities within the class and challenged pupils by requiring them to make contributions to the lesson. Expectations and challenges in A level drama and theatre studies are outstanding. An excellent Year 11 English lesson about 'To Kill a Mocking Bird' was controlled by a light touch that let pupils attain very high standards through their 'own' efforts.

The weakest lessons wasted significant amounts of the long lessons, showed some degree of disorganisation or lack of planning and met few objectives. The standards of pupils' work were not raised. Some satisfactory lessons did not always sufficiently challenge the most able pupils.

The skills of literacy are particularly well taught and this is revealed in the quality of pupils' writing right through the school. Much of the sixth form folder work is very good indeed. The 'paired reading' is very well done. It raises the standards of pupils' work and enhances the very good relationships between pupils. The skills of numeracy are taught well within

mathematics at Key Stage 3 and well re-inforced in some subjects, for example science and history.

Pupils with special educational needs make at least the same progress as their peers. Some teachers do not use individual education plans as effectively as they might. These are clearly set out by the special educational needs co-ordinator but departments need to produce their own guidance as to how individual targets might best be met within their subject work. Gifted and talented pupils are well catered for through a Summer School, 'Challenge' Saturday mornings and the appointment of a co-ordinator.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Opportunities at GCSE and in the sixth form are very rich and meet the needs of pupils. The 4 lesson day is inflexible and makes some lessons too infrequent. Excellent opportunities outside lessons for extra work, sport and clubs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils do well in examinations. In some lessons, the use made of classroom assistants could be improved and pupils' individual targets could be better addressed by teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Spiritual development is not a feature of this inspection. Moral is excellent with citizenship already a feature of the school. Social and cultural development is good, though European links are not strong. The School Council currently has a low profile amongst pupils in Years 7-11 but is well established in the sixth form.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils feel secure and all staff demonstrate a high level of care for them. Academic progress is well monitored and support provided in various ways to help pupils do better. The use of data to predict how well pupils might do is good and rapidly developing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good, a very supportive and effective team. The headteacher has a clear vision of school improvement. Senior and subject managers have taken a lead in monitoring and evaluating the standards of pupils' work, teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. A very perceptive core team led by a chairman who is straightforward and considers decisions carefully.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Very good use of information about pupils, leads to close scrutiny of how well they actually do and what might be done to help them. This leads to an evaluation of how well the school is doing.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Excellent financial control. Best Value well applied in purchasing and external contracts. Use of information technology for communication between the two sites is poor.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standards• Progress• Behaviour• Teaching• Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodation and provision for physical education and games• Accommodation for the sixth form• Problems associated with pupil movement between the two sites

The inspection team agrees with parents that this is a very good school. Accommodation and the associated resources do need improving, though good or better standards are attained despite the inadequacies noted in the report. Problems associated with pupils moving between the sites might be reduced with better accommodation. Pupils do travel promptly and with a high level of common sense.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils' make very good progress in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9

1. In English at Key Stage 3 the percentages of pupils attaining Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above are well above the national averages. The trend over the last four years has been for attainment at Key Stage 3 to be very high in comparison with similar schools and well above the national average. Within this pattern girls are achieving significantly better than boys. In Key Stage 3 the assessment of pupils' work has improved. The targets they are set to help them strive for improvement are clearer. Measures to improve the literacy of pupils have been very successful. Pupils' standards of speaking and listening are very good. Pupils respond enthusiastically to questions with relevant, well-formed answers showing that they have listened carefully to their teachers and their peers. The quality of English teaching is a strength of the school. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Most lessons are good or better and a variety of well-planned activities, appropriate for the ability and maturity of pupils, are used to promote effective learning in all English attainment targets (talking and listening, reading and writing). The very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils supports the effective work that goes on in lessons. Pupils work well, individually and in groups, sticking to their tasks and taking mature responsibility for the quality of their learning and for their own progress. Clear educational aims and monitoring of teaching standards reflect effective leadership and management in English.

2. Standards of mathematics of pupils on entry to the school are in line with national averages. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well above the average for similar schools. Number work linked to the development of algebraic skills is well developed in Year 7 within the framework of the national numeracy strategy. Examples of number work being linked successfully to describing data and presenting them graphically were observed in Year 9. Pupils with little previous experience in the use of information and communication technology make good progress in Year 7 in response to a clear policy statement in mathematics.

3. In science, standards at Key Stage 3 in the national SAT tests of 1999 are well above the national average. This appears to have been maintained in 2000. Standards of pupils' work seen are above average. In Year 7, pupils starting Curriculum 2000 are developing investigative skills, such as planning and evaluation of experiments. In Years 8 and 9 these skills are less well developed though pupils do carry out experiments competently and safely.

4. In all three years of Key Stage 3, pupils amass substantial amounts of scientific knowledge and concepts. For example, in Year 7 they clearly recall earlier work on acids, alkalis and neutralisation and can relate this knowledge to familiar situations, such as the treatment of wasp stings and methods of food preservation. In Year 8 they have a good understanding of sound and more able pupils relate this to the functioning of the ear. In Year 9 teachers' effective reviews of work and examination coaching, help to raise standards in the national tests.

5. Invariably, teachers employ a range of activities to maintain the interest of pupils, as for example when a Year 8 lesson on sound was introduced with a quiz on a variety of recorded noises. The fact that lower school pupils especially enjoy their science is reflected in the numbers of pupils who attend the science club at lunch time. During inspection week, a laboratory became a hive of activity as 40 pupils busily prepared chemical salts - an extension of their classwork.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 4

6. In 1999, the average points score attained by pupils at GCSE was above the average attained by pupils who had similar attainment at the end of Year 9, two years previously. In other words, pupils achieved well and the school added value to the standards of their work. The proportion of pupils who achieved 5 or more GCSE grades in the range A*-G was very high, in the top 5 per cent nationally, compared to the proportion that might have been expected to do so. The proportion that gained 5 or more GCSE grades in the range A*-C, was average. However, this has improved in 2000. The trend in GCSE results has fluctuated, kept above average and more or less followed the national trend of slow improvement. In 2000 the school's GCSE results show a more rapid improvement. Significant improvements in resistant materials and systems and control technology results contributed to the schools' success.

7. A significant factor in helping pupils' progress in recent years has been the successful development of teachers' management roles through a professional development programme. The monitoring role of heads of departments is now recognised in the cover arrangements for lessons – they are given time to do lesson observations. Such observations are given a high profile and their timing is published weekly. Annual reviews between heads of department and link senior managers analyse standards of teaching and of pupils' attainment so each department can set targets for improvement. The school was successful in its bid to become a pilot school for the local education authority in self-evaluation. This is an indication of the school's determination to raise standards in examination results through improvements in teaching and learning.

8. In English GCSE lessons, pupils demonstrate very good levels of speaking and listening in groups. They courteously and positively incorporate evidence from others and build on shared opinions to arrive at well argued evaluations of their work. Most pupils demonstrate competence in the use of more technical vocabulary, for example in discussion of literature. Pupils accurately use standard English in more formal and academic context. Pupils read, understand and respond critically to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts.

9. Pupils' written work is generally well presented. Most pupils achieve standards of accuracy in grammar, spelling and punctuation above national expectations for their age. Pupils are able to write fluently and extensively in a range of contexts, including the scripts of plays, diaries and business letters. Written homeworks are logical extensions of the skills and content introduced in lessons. Classroom preparation for written work is good, with clear targets, an explanation of aims and marking criteria and relevant exercises as part of the planning.

10. The quality of English teaching is even better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Teachers know their subject well and pupils are well motivated. Excellent relationships are observed in all lessons and it is evident that pupils enjoy their work. Marking is good and assessment is well managed. Very competent teachers are well deployed, with tasks appropriate to their qualifications and abilities. Responsibilities are effectively delegated. Regular monitoring of teaching quality takes place, in line with school policies. Resources are well used. All these factors contribute to the good progress made by pupils.

11. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades is in line with national averages in 1999 and that for A*-G grades is above the national average in that year. The proportion of A*-C grades has varied between 51% and 38% (in 1998) during the period 1997 to 1999. The number of A*,B grades has been comparatively lower than nationally but this has increased in 2000, for which no national comparisons are yet available. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 present investigations of a high standard with extended writing explaining their investigation. In Year 10, higher attaining pupils progress from an initial use of Pythagoras' Theorem to the linking of it to the solution of equations in algebra. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11 make good progress in relation to their previous attainment due to good support of their work by class assistants, who work closely with the teacher.

12. A strong supporting feature of pupils' progress in mathematics, at both Key Stages 3 and 4, is the setting of purposeful homework on a regular basis. This is marked regularly by teachers, though comments on the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' answers need to be better. Pupils' numeracy develops further in Key Stage 4, for example in the extension work given to Pythagoras' Theorem. However, some average and lower attaining pupils in Year 10 find difficulty with statistical work due to weakness in number skills. Science makes full use of number, algebraic and graphical skills in all aspects of biology, chemistry and physics and pupils' skills are sufficiently strong for them to make good progress in these subjects.

13. At GCSE, examination results in dual award science and the separate sciences are broadly in line with national averages and standards observed support this. Results in physics and chemistry have improved significantly in recent years. In 1999, there were fewer pupils gaining the highest grades of A* and A than might be expected. As at Key Stage 3 pupils display confident practical skills, but their ability to evaluate investigations is weaker. They show secure knowledge across the scientific disciplines; for example, they describe cell structure accurately and understand the significance of the two different types of cell division. Pupils have a good understanding of the chemical reactions of metals, and can do a range of appropriate calculations in physics.

14. Science teaching is almost always satisfactory and is good overall. Lessons are generally well planned to progressively build up knowledge and understanding. The teaching of scientific knowledge is thorough and pupils' notebooks hence provide them with an excellent revision resource. Practical lessons are rigorous with much attention to safety and good practice, but too frequently there is less opportunity for pupils to plan investigations and think for themselves. Support staff work effectively with teachers to enable pupils with special learning needs to keep up with the rest of the class. Extension work, however, is prepared too infrequently for the more able pupils. Much useful homework is set at all levels and effectively reinforces work done in class. Good class management by teachers and the positive attitudes of pupils are effective in raising standards.

The literacy of those pupils who have some reading difficulties is substantially improved

15. The success of the school's literacy policy has a significant positive influence on the qualities of teaching and learning across the school. The policy is clearly set out in the staff handbook and is supported in all departments. There is a literacy coordinator and a literacy management group with representatives from different subject departments. Good practice observed during the inspection included: work in science, where spelling errors are noted and corrections required; classroom organisation in history, where key words on display also include examples from other cultures, (for example Islam). Good examples are also seen of substantial writing in Year 11 mathematics course work.

16. The National Literacy Strategy has been employed for the past two years and two successful literacy summer schools have been organised. Appropriate and effective follow up measures are in place to support pupils in Key Stage 3. A scheme to encourage reading, 'Book Action', is effective and enjoyed by pupils.

17. A very successful scheme for 'paired reading' is in its fourth year. In this, over sixty senior pupils have been trained to help pupils from years 7, 8 and 9 to read more fluently. This is an admirable example of pupils taking on responsibility and showing respect and care for others. Good examples of pupils engaged in private reading and reading aloud were observed in many lessons. The "Paired Reading" arrangements for weaker pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 bring about very significant improvements in the measured reading ages of the pupils. Examples of good practice were seen in which pupils were engaged in private reading, keeping a reading log and reading aloud.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good

18. Pupils are enthusiastic about the school. They enjoy their learning experiences and value the education that they receive and the support offered to them. Pupils' standard of behaviour is almost always very good and this is confirmed by the very low number of exclusions and the degree of satisfaction that is expressed by parents.

19. Pupils' personal development is good. They undertake their work in a responsible manner, co-operate well and are mutually supportive. Although opportunities for formal responsibilities are limited, pupils respond in a mature manner when, for example, they are appointed prefects or are involved in paired reading or charity supported activities. Sixth formers used as 'prefects' in the lower school provide excellent role models for younger pupils and are well respected by them. Other sixth formers provided excellent voluntary support in some lessons, like mathematics and information technology. Pupils' sense of citizenship develops well through the many opportunities that they have for involvement in the community and the practices of the Catholic Church.

20. The standard of pupils' attendance and punctuality is very good.

Progress in the use of information and communication technology is substantial

21. A key issue stated in the last report was for the school to 'develop the use of information technology across the curriculum'. This it has done and substantial progress has been made.

22. In Years 7 and 8 pupils have discrete information and communication technology lessons. Standards of work are average, for example pupils can enter text into a word processing programme and import and modify pictures. In Year 7 the attainment of pupils when they enter the school is variable with many pupils describing only limited experiences with ICT in their primary schools. A few pupils are very capable due to opportunities provided at home. This school recognises both ends of the spectrum, with good support for the less able from both classroom assistants and sixth form volunteers. Two able Year 7 pupils were challenged in one class to produce an ICT presentation for projection to the whole class. They benefited from the challenge and the class were made more aware of what they could aspire to.

23. There is also good practice in the use of ICT within subjects. Mathematics has a particularly well thought out plan. Year 7 pupils are moved to the upper school site to utilise the better computers and software available. In one lesson pupils were drawing precise shapes with mathematical instructions. Their attitudes and behaviour were excellent. Very

good teaching supported very good learning and they made substantial progress. Their attainment, though, was below average. Upon questioning it was obvious that they began with low standards in this aspect of the work and the teacher, with classroom support, was picking them up appropriately and moving them on as fast as possible.

24. Other subjects making good inroads into the use of ICT to support teaching and pupils' learning include, English, science, design and technology, history, geography and music. Science and technology have substantial resources on the school shared computer drive so pupils can make use of them on any point of the school's network. This even extends to lesson plans and notes in technology so pupils can catch up on return from absence. An innovative site licence for design software, coupled with very good anti virus protection, allows pupils in graphics to continue their computer work at home and then bring it in. The art scheme of work now includes a sophisticated paint software package with on line tutorials for sixth form students so their experience can broaden through their own efforts. In 1999, a group of 8 Year 10 and 11 pupils won a Merseyside Performing Arts Animation Competition for work that included music. In English pupils make use of good access to the Internet and they are developing ICT skills associated with reading. This is more evident in coursework at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In science, in a Year 10 class, computers are used effectively to recap previous work on electron flow before pupils are introduced to the theory and practice of electrolysis.

25. In Year 10 pupils can choose to do a GCSE in information technology and currently 63 pupils have done so. This is a very high proportion in national terms. In 1999 the entry was half as large, but still above average. Standards were above average overall and well above in the proportion of pupils who attained higher grades. Year 13 students are completing CLAIT vocational courses in IT whilst Year 12 has begun Advanced GNVQ in IT. This has proved so popular that three groups have had to be started. This is causing some pressure on good computer resources on the upper site.

26. Many staff have benefited from laptops made available to them from the school and through national initiatives. They have developed their own skills and utilised them with their pupils, either to help plan lessons and keep records, or in their teaching. It is in this positive atmosphere that New Opportunities Lottery Funded training, for teachers, has begun. There is also a new head of ICT. The appointment of a second full time technician allows technical support on both sites.

27. Information and communication technology also impacts on the school's work within the community because CLAIT courses are offered to parents in the evening. These are very popular.

28. Though substantial progress has been made the school recognises more has yet to be done. For example, an effective school intranet is needed, another ICT room for subjects to utilise is rapidly becoming necessary, and a school based e-mail service would be useful. The school is moving forward on most of these issues. Some depend upon waiting for developments by the Merseyside Area Network (MAN) project. Current school e-mail connections rely on sending messages to the local server for return to the school. This is only effective if that service can be consistently relied upon.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Accommodation and resources for physical education, the sixth form, design and technology and science

29. Accommodation and resources in a school are most often commented upon if their

poor quality or paucity contributes to poor standards of pupils' work. In this school, there are no poor standards and often good or very good ones despite adversity. This is a credit to the hard work put in by teachers and pupils and the very good attitudes and behaviour exhibited by pupils. Improved accommodation and resources would both reward them and possibly lead to even higher standards, though no one can predict that.

30. In physical education, despite having no sports hall and very limited outdoor facilities, some shared with the public, standards at GCSE in 1999 were in line with national ones. In team sports and athletics the school has been very successful in recent years. Boys' football has won local and Merseyside Cup championships and done very well in the English Schools FA Cup. In volleyball the school has won both under 18 and under 15 national championships and had boys selected for regional teams, three for England. At cross-country the school has been overall local champion for seven years. In athletics there is a similar good picture at local and regional levels. Girls' physical education is also successfully supported through games and competition. Hockey and netball is particularly well done with the Under 16 netball team being Liverpool champions. In athletics, girls are the Sefton Schools Division 2 Champions 2000.

31. At present, Year 7 and Year 8 girls have to go to the upper site to find changing facilities, boys, from Year 9 upwards, to the lower site. This necessitates pupils carrying even more bags, and wastes time. When using field facilities, shared by the public, toilets are not always of an appropriate standard and, presumably, whatever is on the field has to be dealt with.

32. The sixth form is a victim of its own success. With over 200 students the wooden hut that serves them as a common room is overflowing and corridor space in the main building has to be used, albeit creatively, to support study facilities. It seems unlikely that the number in the sixth form can expand further. A simple answer might be a sixth form block, but this might remove an important aspect of the sixth form in this school – its positive integration into the life of the school.

33. Design and technology offers a very broad curriculum: resistant materials; graphics; systems and control, food and textiles technology. In the sixth form there are healthy A level groups making substantial use of ICT facilities. Standards are variable, but most often good, with substantial improvement in two areas of GCSE work in 2000.

34. The accommodation for design and technology is tidy but, particularly in the workshop and food areas, well below that considered as best, or even adequate practice today. Fume and dust extraction is an area for concern in the workshops. The floor surface and gaps around work surfaces are not appropriate in food rooms. The resistant material preparation area is dreadful. Workshops on the lower site fall well below normal standards. The creative use of old drawing tables to make work benches is now beyond its sell by date. Many schools offering less and doing rather less well, enjoy far better facilities through various grants and initiatives. Resources that this school would make good use of, that are currently lacking, include computer-assisted design and manufacturing equipment.

35. Science has had some laboratories refurbished to a degree but they are possibly unique in their location and origins – nuns' cells at the top of a three-storey block. The school has made substantial changes through moving walls and relocating fittings, but it does not stop some of them being rather small and poorly ventilated. In addition, a peculiar, non-standard, three-pin electrical socket system was fitted into the laboratories at some stage of their development. Conversion leads to allow standard equipment to plug in are provided. As the department expands the use of ICT, including laptops and sensors, a difficult situation will be made worse. In one lesson observed, group sizes had to be large and squeezed into

inadequate spaces to make use of sockets and leads. Setting up time was longer and the jumble of leads not good practice.

36. The Archdiocese of Liverpool has made known its intention to make Sacred Heart a centre for disabled pupils with access for wheelchairs. Though a small lift serves the top floor of the main school, it is hard to see how several wheelchairs could be accommodated in, for example, the cramped science laboratories. Very significant alterations and costs are likely if the intention is realised.

Computer data connections between the two school sites and computer facilities at the Lower School

37. Sacred Heart is a split site school. Years 7 and 8 are effectively accommodated on the lower site, the rest on the upper. At present there is no information and communication technology link between sites. As schools function better with easy access to data and the sharing of resources, this position is not very efficient.

38. The computer facilities on the lower site are not as good as those on the upper site, neither have they the software provided with the MEON machines. Consequently, pupils have to make additional journeys between sites to take advantage of necessary software.

39. If a substantial ICT link is provided between sites and the lower site machines are upgraded, curriculum development and school intranet work need not be developed piecemeal and could be effectively accessed by staff and pupils wherever they are. In addition, school management data and pupils' assessment information could also be utilised more effectively, especially as managers rotate between sites. An internal e-mail system, using the link, would also permit better communications between staff, staff and pupils, and pupils and pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. In order to raise the standards of pupils' work further, or to improve the quality of their education the governors should:

- (1) Improve accommodation and integral resources within physical education, design and technology, science and for the sixth form by:
 - Considering potential improvements as a whole, rather than piecemeal.
 - Pursuing funding streams
 - Rationalising choices
 - Prioritising developments
 - Setting target dates for improvements.(Paragraphs: 29-35)

- (2) Improve further the use of information technology by:
 - Improving the quality of facilities on the lower site.
 - Pursuing the appropriate organisations for a fast ICT connection between the two school sites.(Paragraphs: 37-39)

THE SIXTH FORM

41. The school offers a very good range of A level, A/S level and GNVQ vocational courses. Standards achieved by the end of Year 13 are well above national averages. The average points score achieved by candidates entered for two or more GCE A level or A/S level equivalent was well above national averages in 1999 and, although the average points score has declined a little in the past three years, the size of the sixth form has doubled and caters for students from a broader ability range. Pupils entered for GCSE examinations in 1998 achieved very well in relation to their abilities. As a result, predictions for those students, at A and A/S level, based on their performance at GCSE, assumed a progression beyond their actual capabilities. Consequently, the average points score in 2000 has taken a more substantial dip. There is no evidence that this will be repeated next year.

42. In English, there is evidence of speaking and listening skills at very high levels. Question and answer sessions move very quickly covering a lot of material because answers are accurate and precise. The best discussion lessons observed demonstrated outstanding skills in speaking and listening.

43. High quality numerical skills are observed in geography. The use of graphs and number work in the analysis of data supports experimental work of a high standard. Similarly, in A level psychology a high level of numeracy is used to support a wide range of investigative work.

44. In mathematics, students obtained a pass rate that was consistently close to 90 percent, from 1997 to 1999. The proportion of candidates obtaining A, B grades varied during that period from 45 to 20 percent. Students from both the intermediate and higher tiers of GCSE undertake A level studies of pure mathematics with the statistics option. Pupils from the intermediate tier make good progress in undertaking the A level course. While the general standard of work is good, as reflected by these results, some students find difficulty in applying basic number and algebraic skills in more complex problems.

45. In science standards are good. Smaller class sizes account for some fluctuations in exam results but generally chemistry and biology results are in line with, or a little higher, than their national averages, whilst those in physics are below. Students demonstrate good note-taking skills and good extended writing is seen in homework and project work. In biology they understand the subject material in depth, for example the detailed biochemistry of the cell. Students carry out appropriate practical work in organic chemistry to investigate, for example, the reactions of the haloalkanes.

46. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Of the lessons observed 73 percent are good or better and 13 percent very good or excellent. Teachers have a strong command of their subject and use their knowledge effectively to plan lessons, enabling students to build successfully on previous learning. Many lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and teachers have high expectations of students so promoting effective learning. The most successful teaching displays a variety of approaches. It includes rigorous and skilful questioning of students who respond enthusiastically and show very good progress in developing their communication and research skills. This is most evident in the high standard of coursework and of debate seen in many subject areas. Almost all lessons in the sixth form are characterised by excellent relationships where students are able to contribute freely to discussion. A few lessons, however, encourage little student participation and provide insufficient challenge. Teaching is too dominant, decreasing the challenge to students and the opportunities to explore issues for themselves. While overall standards are good, the school should continue to review its strategies for teaching and learning in the sixth form, so that students build progressively on their achievements at Key Stage 4.

47. Advanced level history classwork is of a high standard. Half of an option group are working at A and B standards. They can give very shrewd, precise answers to questions on the 1930's depression and national government. Year 12 business education work is of a satisfactory standard and lessons lead from good activities to raise students' understanding of such issues as organisational structures. However, students are given too little responsibility for their own note taking and this is inappropriate for the more able. In a similar vein, GNVQ health and social care lessons start well, allow for discussions, but can miss opportunities for small group work and can direct pupils too much. Year 13 psychology lessons manage to challenge higher and lower attaining students through using case studies and through the teacher's very effective question and answer technique. Although the standards of written work are high in modern languages, the pace of an A level French lesson was too slow and gave insufficient opportunities for pupils to use the language.

48. The induction procedures for post 16 students are good. The transition from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form is well managed. Admission of both internal and external students into the sixth form follows well-organised and structured procedures. At the heart of these lies a genuine concern for the individual student. Substantial consultations with teachers, parents and particularly with students themselves, is the basis of the procedures to select courses. In addition to this, students are made aware of alternative options at other institutions and this information has improved since the time of the last inspection. Induction procedures continue throughout the first term of their entry into the sixth form, with guidance on study skills. Students are closely monitored to ensure that they are on courses that are suitable for them. Students value the support and guidance they receive throughout their courses and see this as a major strength of the sixth form at the school.

49. The school does its best to ensure that students are able to take the subject combinations relevant to their preferences and aspirations and the timetable is flexible to accommodate their choices. However, at present, arrangements for physical education and the general studies course are unsatisfactory and the school should review these in order to improve the breadth and balance of the sixth form curriculum.

50. The head of sixth form provides very good and effective leadership. The sixth form committee is effective in organising social events and other facilities and students are actively involved both in helping younger members of the school and in the wider community.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	15	52	23	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1097	206
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	194	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	167	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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
	1999	110	106	216

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	79	77
	Girls	96	81	71
	Total	183	160	148
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (84)	74 (76)	69 (69)
	National	63 (64)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (46)	44 (42)	25 (30)
	National	28 (34)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	83	80	78
	Girls	93	78	77
	Total	176	158	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	81 (60)	73 (63)	72 (40)
	National	64 (54)	64 (61)	60 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	34 (26)	34 (31)	26 (23)
	National	31 (24)	37 (35)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	109	105	214

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	50	107	108
	Girls	68	105	105
	Total	118	212	213
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	55 (52)	99 (99)	100 (100)
	National	46.6 (46.3)	90.9 (87.5)	95.8 (93.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.5 (42.6)
	National	38 (37)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	23	30	53

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	23	17.1	19.8 (22.4)	0	0.6	0.4 (0.2)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	1243
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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	8	1
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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	75.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	518

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.8
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.6
Key Stage 4	20.1

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2 996 855
Total expenditure	3 044 485
Expenditure per pupil	2 494
Balance brought forward from previous year	126 911
Balance carried forward to next year	79 281

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	989
Number of questionnaires returned	464

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	50	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	49	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	51	7	3	1
The teaching is good.	48	49	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	43	9	1	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	34	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	23	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	45	6	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	38	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	39	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	38	7	2	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents did not like the movement between sites, particularly the carrying of heavy bags, physical education kit and sometimes musical instruments. Parents suggested better accommodation was needed for the sixth form and for sport.