

INSPECTION REPORT

WICKERSLEY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Bawtry Road, Wickersley, Rotherham

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106955

Headteacher: Mr J T Deeley

Reporting inspector: John Palmer
2450

Dates of inspection: 27 November – 1 December 2000

Inspection number: 223892

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 - 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bawtry Road
Wickersley
Rotherham
South Yorkshire

Postcode: S66 1JL

Telephone number: 01709 542147

Fax number: 01709 703364

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Moore

Date of previous inspection: 6 February 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Palmer 2450	Registered inspector		Standards
			Teaching
			Leadership and Management
Hilary Herring 19560	Lay inspector		Pupils' Attitudes
			Partnership with parents
			Extra-Curriculum Activities
			Community Links
Donald Innes 3943	Team inspector	English including Drama	
		Literacy	
Sylvia Innes 22524	Team inspector	Design and Technology	
Joe Edge 1249	Team inspector	Science	Sixth Form
David Rogers 20533	Team inspector	Art	
Miles Robottom 5851	Team inspector	History	Curriculum
			Work Related education
Eric Deeson 15163	Team inspector	Information Technology	
Marie Blewitt 23556	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	English as an additional language
Sue Jones 22501	Team inspector	Music	Personal and Social Education
			Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Shirley Stanley 30128	Team inspector	Religious Education	Equal Opportunities
			Pers Development and Attendance
Tom Allen 31218	Team inspector	Geography	Pupils' welfare
			Assessment and Monitoring
Robert Castle 22590	Team inspector	Physical Education	Accommodation, learning resources and staffing
Mary Harrison 13066	Team inspector		Special Educational Needs
			Hearing Impaired Department
John Lockett 10340	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Numeracy	
Andrew Lagden 28101	Team inspector		Work related curriculum
Niall Carr 12825	Team inspector		Vocationally oriented subjects and 'Working Out' and 'Transitions' programmes

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH
Tel: 020 8289 1923/4/5
Fax: 020 8289 1919

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The Registrar
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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wickersley school is a large, mixed comprehensive school for pupils in the 11-18 age range with 1778 pupils on roll, including a sixth form of 342. This is a popular and stable school, serving its immediate area and beyond and with only a little movement of pupils. Pupils are from a range of social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is, at around 12 per cent, in line with the national average as is the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs (12.6 per cent) including statements (2.7 per cent). The school hosts a hearing impaired department, on behalf of Rotherham LEA, which supports the education of 11 pupils. Forty-one pupils, largely in the sixth form, are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. Currently the school has no traveller or refugee pupils.

Although the pupils, on entry to the school at the age of 11, have levels of attainment in line with the national averages for most subjects, their attainment in English is somewhat below. The cohort of pupils in each year group generally covers the normal span of ability, as tested by the school, but with relatively low numbers of pupils of very high, or very low, ability. The sixth form provides for the needs of a wide range of pupils, including 'A' level and advanced GNVQ pupils with realistic ambitions to progress to university as well as courses for pupils with learning difficulties. A significant proportion of A-level pupils enter the course with relatively low GCSE grades. The school has recently become a part of the Rotherham 'Excellence in Cities' programme with a particular focus on able and talented pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school in which pupils make good progress and attain standards at GCSE which are above the national averages. Pupils and students are very well behaved and generally apply themselves to their work with commitment and enthusiasm. The most significant cause of the pupils' positive response in lessons is the good standard of teaching which is a strength of the school. Many very good lessons were seen during the inspection. Leadership is broadly effective. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and his senior management team effectively sustain a positive ethos and educational provision which strives to meet the need of all pupils.
- The teaching is good and enables the pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils behave very well both about the school and in lessons. Their personal, social and moral development is very well catered for through the very good personal and social education programme, the very effective work by tutors and the very good school ethos.
- The school is increasingly effective in monitoring pupils' progress through the pastoral system and in its provision to ensure children's welfare.
- The curriculum, including activities outside the lesson timetable, is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of pupils of all abilities.
- Vocational education, including careers education, is very effective.
- The learning support and hearing impaired departments meet the needs of pupils, and teachers give effective additional support, out of lessons, to pupils experiencing learning difficulties.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring skills of literacy, particularly in oral communication.
- Support staff, including teaching assistants, enhance the work of managers and teachers.

What could be improved

- Information on pupils' attainments and potential is not used systematically by every teacher to monitor underachievement and plan teaching around the needs of particular groups of pupils.
- Individual education plans lack precision and are not used effectively by most teachers to plan provision for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes.
- Lower-attaining A-level students often fail to attain the grades of which they are capable in a large number of subjects.
- The school is overcrowded and much of the accommodation is poor and impairs learning.

- Planning procedures in some departments lack precision and are inadequately monitored by the senior management team to ensure proper implementation of whole-school policies and priorities.
- Provision to support and guide the teaching of information technology by non-specialist teachers across the curriculum is weak and impairs the teaching of the National Curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in 1995, it has addressed most of the weaknesses that were identified. Standards have risen, in line with the national trend, in the tests at 14 and in the GCSE and A level examinations. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is greatly improved as is the overall performance of boys. The school now makes much better provision for a daily act of collective worship. There is more pace and challenge in the work set for pupils. Pupils' attendance is effectively monitored and formal registration takes place at the start of the afternoon session. The governors' annual report to parents meets legal requirements. The work of tutors is now very effective. Slower progress has been made in developing the system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of whole-school policies. The governors have not set down systematic procedures for ensuring cost effectiveness in their spending decisions.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	C	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	C	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In recent years, in the statutory tests in English, mathematics and science, pupils have achieved standards above the national averages. At GCSE, pupils continue to outstrip the national averages. Pupils make good progress from 11 to 16. A-level results are in line with national averages, but mask some under-achievement by lower-attaining students. Results in advanced GNVQ are good. Pupils' work is generally of a satisfactory standard and reflects satisfactory levels of literacy. Pupils have good skills of oral communication. The school has comfortably exceeded its statutory targets for pupils' GCSE results in 2000 and now needs to raise its targets for subsequent years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to the school generally and to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well, both in and out of classrooms, and the incidence of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, is very low.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of pupils is good and relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are constructive and respectful.
Attendance	Attendance is good and pupils arrive punctually at lessons, when the organisation of the school day permits.

The good quality of pupils' attitudes and values is a strength of the school. Throughout the inspection the pupils behaved well and in a courteous and appropriate way. The incidence of exclusions is low.

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.

The general quality of teaching is good and often very good, especially at Key Stage 3. Ninety-eight per cent of teaching seen was satisfactory or better and only 30 per cent was satisfactory or worse; only 2 per cent of it was unsatisfactory. 23 per cent was very good or better. The teaching of English is invariably at least satisfactory and usually good or very good, especially in the sixth form. The same is true of science where only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in the week of the inspection. The teaching of mathematics is consistently satisfactory or good throughout the school. Teachers of nearly all subjects generally teach effectively; planning is thorough and teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject. However, many individual teachers do not make good use of the assessment information at their disposal to offer focused feedback to pupils and to target their teaching to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. As a result, some pupils do not have a clear view as to what they need to do to improve. However, generally pupils work well, with enthusiasm and at a good pace. The skills of literacy are particularly well taught, both in English lessons and across the curriculum. Numeracy skills are also well taught in mathematics lessons but are taught only sporadically in other subjects. In year 7 the school has made good and effective links with the national literacy and numeracy projects. The school meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is a second language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of pupils. Arrangements for work-related education are particularly strong as is provision to meet the needs of disaffected pupils. Arrangements to ensure continuity with primary schools are very good. There are no significant weaknesses in the curriculum except for the provision to support non-specialist teachers to teach information technology across the curriculum from 11 to 16. The full requirements of National Curriculum information technology are not met at Key Stage 4. The curriculum has many strengths, including good vocational and work-related courses and courses which successfully cater for disaffected pupils and those with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision is made in the learning support and hearing impaired departments to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Provision in mainstream classes is satisfactory, although better use needs to be made of individual education plans.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for the 41 pupils for whom English is a second language is effective. The one student for whom English is a new language receives appropriate one-to-one support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for the moral and social development of pupils is very good and that for cultural development is good. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good, and eliminating bad, behaviour are particularly effective.

The school works effectively in partnership with the parents although parents generally have not contributed well to pupils' school planners. Reports to parents on pupils' progress are unsatisfactory and need to be sharper and clearer in their assessment of strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and his senior management team give thoughtful direction to the work of the school and have been particularly effective in sustaining the very good school ethos and the inclusive curriculum. However, the management team has already recognised the need to take a stronger grip on the quality of departmental planning and the pursuit, by departments, of whole-school priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors conscientiously fulfil their statutory requirements but need to have a clearer view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the work of departments in fulfilling pupils' potential.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Recently the school has developed appropriate systems for the collection and use of data on the attainment, innate abilities and predicted grades of all pupils. However, it has yet to use this information consistently well, either to interpret examination and test results or to set challenging targets in lessons.
The strategic use of resources	The headteacher and the governors link their resource decisions to the needs of the school and the priorities on the school development plan. They do so effectively, although the poor state of the accommodation continues to damage the quality of education. Staffing resources are good and learning resources are broadly satisfactory. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Spending decisions are not systematically tested against the principles of 'best value'.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good progress that pupils make across the curriculum. • Pupils behave well and the incidence of bullying is low. • The school is well led and managed. • The Year 8 residential trip. • The raising of self-esteem through the provision of a common room for Year 11. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate reports on pupils' progress. • Too much or too little homework. • Over-long wait for Year 7 parents to meet subject teachers. • Overuse of mixed-ability lessons. • Too many mobiles. • Poor state of one of the girls' toilet blocks.

Parents are broadly supportive of the school. The inspection team agrees with parents about the strengths of the school. It also agrees that improvements are needed in the reports on pupils' progress, which need to be sharper in their judgements and offer targets for improvement. The team finds that most teachers adhere to the appropriate school homework timetable set by the school and set work that extends that done in class. However, a minority of teachers ignore the homework timetable and set 'finishing off' work that neither extends nor augments work done in lessons. Parents of Year 7 pupils wait until towards the end of the academic year before having a full parent's evening at which they can meet their children's subject teachers. The accommodation is poor and impairs learning. The state of one of the girls' toilet blocks is poor and urgently needs maintenance or refurbishment. The team does not agree that the school overuses mixed-ability classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

'Similar schools' throughout the report refers to schools which have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is considered to be a valid indicator by which to compare schools providing education for pupils of similar backgrounds.

THE SCHOOL'S RESULTS AND PUPILS' OR STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

1. In the statutory tests for fourteen-year-olds in English, mathematics and science, over the past five years, pupils have generally achieved results above the national averages. In the 2000 tests, however, English results fell slightly below the national average for the first time in recent years. There had been no significant changes to the staffing of the English department, nor changes to the approach taken to teaching this subject, and this dip may prove to be an aberration. In comparison with similar schools, in the 2000 tests, pupils achieved results that were well above the average in science and in line with the average in maths. The English test results were below the average, having been above the average in the previous year.
2. In recent years, both boys and girls have exceeded their national averages in all three subjects. Over this time the gap in attainment between girls and boys narrowed and has now disappeared in both mathematics and science. Although boys closed the gap on girls in the English Tests between 1996 and 1999, boys attained significantly lower results than girls in the 2000 tests. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 in all other subjects, except physical education, suggest that more girls than boys attain the nationally expected level but only to the same extent that pertains nationally. Overall both boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs, make good progress from their entry to the school, at the age of eleven, to the age of fourteen. This conclusion is strongly supported during the inspection by the observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work.
3. At GCSE over recent years pupils have generally attained results above the national averages for the percentage attaining five or more A*-C grades. The average points score of pupils, and the percentage attaining lower grade passes have been in line with national averages. However, in 2000, GCSE results exceeded the national averages across all measures. Pupils' attainments reflect good progress since the age of 11, including during the two years of GCSE studies. However, pupils attain rather lower results at GCSE than their performance in the test for fourteen-year-olds would predict. Observations of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work indicate, however, that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in these final two years of statutory schooling and it is their good levels of attainment in the statutory tests at 14 which give rise to artificially high predictions of their performance at GCSE.
4. In comparison with similar schools in recent years pupils have attained standards at GCSE that are well above average in science and above average in mathematics. Levels of attainment in English are below the average for similar schools and reflect the relatively lower than average levels of attainment in this subject by many pupils on entry to the school at the age of eleven.
5. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, overall results were broadly in line with the national averages for art and design, design and technology, drama, English language and

literature, geography, home economics, information technology, sociology and Spanish. Results were above the national averages in business studies, science, French, history, mathematics, French and physical education. Only in German were the results below the national averages. Boys also achieved above the national average in English literature, French and geography but were in line with them in mathematics and history.

6. Across all subjects at GCSE, over the past four years, pupils' results have been close to the national averages. Girls have continued to do better than boys, although the gap between them has closed markedly over recent years.
7. Over recent years students, both girls and boys, have achieved overall results at A level which are broadly in line with the national averages. Students who sat the 2000 examinations attained high pass rates in art, business studies, economics, English language and literature, French, history, mathematics, biology, music, drama, sociology, Spanish and sports studies. Pass rates were low in psychology and chemistry.
8. However, the results mask the under achievement of significant numbers of students who enter A level courses with relatively low grade GCSEs. Many of these students either fail their examinations or attain grades below those which they are predicted. These students generally under performed in the 1999 and 2000 A-level examinations in art, psychology, computing, geography, history, biology, chemistry, physics, religious studies, Spanish and sports studies. Other, higher-attaining students, generally attain their predicted grades or exceed them. The school adapts the sixth-form provision to meet the need of individual students with the result that many lower-attaining students drop an A level at the end of their lower sixth year or repeat a year. However, despite these efforts to meet the needs of students and the generally good quality of teaching in the sixth form, including some tailoring of work to meet their needs, too many low-attaining students do not achieve the lower A-level grade of which they are capable. Results in advanced GNVQ are good.
9. The school exceeded its three statutory targets for the 2000 GCSE examinations by a significant margin in each case. The target for the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-C passes of 48 was exceeded by five percentage points. The target for the percentage of pupils attaining one or more A*-C passes of 92 was exceeded by four percentage points. The target for average GCSE points per pupil of 39 was exceeded by two percentage points. Although the GCSE results were better than in previous years, the school's targets for 2000 were unambitious and those for subsequent years should be revised upwards.
10. Standards of literacy improve well as the pupils move up through the school and, by the age of 16, they are broadly in line with national averages across most of the curriculum. Pupils have particularly well-developed skills of oral communication; they express themselves confidently and are prepared to listen, and accept, the points of view of others. Standards of numeracy are at least in line with national averages, but are not developed in all the subjects they could be.
11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall as do those for whom English is a second language. Occasionally they make very good progress. Pupils with physical difficulties make very good progress over several years. Pupils are moved off the special educational needs register and down the identified stages appropriately as they increase their levels of achievement. Students with special educational needs in the sixth form make satisfactory progress on the 'working out'

course.

12. Some students aged 14 to 16, study for Certificates of Achievement in information communication technology and English and make good progress. Some students study for the Youth Award Scheme and are successful.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils have a positive attitude towards school, which is evident from the good attendance rate. This is a strength of the school. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and respond well to the school's high expectations on them. During the course of the inspection behaviour in lessons was at least satisfactory and, in over three quarters of lessons seen, it was good or very good. The behaviour of pupils out of lessons, as they move around the site, is good despite the generally inadequate social space for lunchtime and breaks. The Year 11 common room provides well for Year 11 pupils who treat it with respect.
14. The rate of exclusion of pupils is low and very favourable in comparison with schools of a similar nature and size. Careful consideration is taken by the senior teachers in such circumstances to ensure that pupils are excluded only when strategies to maintain their inclusion have been exhausted.
15. Pupils' personal development is good and is fostered through the pastoral care system. Year heads work closely with tutors to ensure that all pupils experience a supportive and caring environment in school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and teachers present good role models through their interaction with each other and whilst engaging pupils in lessons and other activities. The credit system and governors' awards are appreciated by pupils who respond well to the recognition of individual effort and attainment.
16. Both in lessons, and throughout the school community, pupils respond well to opportunities to work together. Many lessons feature group and paired work, often in teacher-directed groupings. Pupils respond to this with a mature and sensible attitude. The successful integration of wheelchair-bound pupils and those with hearing impairment in lessons and social activities reflects the care and concern shown by other pupils.
17. Pupils also respond very well to the well-planned, easily accessible personal and social education programme which does much to allow pupils to understand the impact of their actions on others and helps them to respect others' feelings, values and beliefs. Very low levels of bullying or oppressive behaviour are evident in the school. Pupils and parents agree that these low levels are created by the school's swift and effective response to such problems.

18. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well in lessons overall, both in the support for learning department and when helped by learning support assistants or support teachers in mainstream classes. For example, when two teachers were teaching a Year 9 science class, because the lesson took place at a brisk pace, and was pitched at the right level, pupils were motivated and they carried out their experiments with great concentration. Pupils were confident in using the apparatus safely and they increased their levels of achievement by using their thinking and scientific skills.
19. Pupils behave very well when they work in the support for learning department where they respond to the very good working atmosphere and are involved in their work. They improve their confidence and take responsibility for their own work. This helps to boost their self-esteem. Pupils with special educational needs form good relationships. This is particularly noticeable in the support for learning department where pupils of different ages sometimes work together. For instance, pupils from Year 8 and Year 10 were seen working on a poster together. The teachers' good management skills have a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to their work. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties respond well to the specific programmes devised for them.
20. The high attendance rates and low levels of unauthorised absence compare well with other schools. Pupils make a punctual start to the day; the vast majority of them living in the immediate area. Registers are marked accurately, a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The high attendance rate promotes opportunities for learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The good general quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Well over 200 lessons were observed during the course of the inspection and on only three occasions were the lessons unsatisfactory. In 70 per cent of all lessons observed across all age groups the teaching was good and often very good. Particularly fine and effective teaching was found in years 7 to 9 where a third of all lessons seen were taught very well.
22. Teachers generally have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and impart it enthusiastically. They plan effectively and set appropriate objectives for the whole class. However, the majority of teachers do not interpret the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs into action plans which are sufficiently precise and rigorous. Although these pupils make good progress, they would do even better were teaching stronger in this respect. Teachers generally manage to challenge and inspire pupils and expect them to attain high standards in their academic work, their application to study and their general behaviour. Pupils respond very well, although in some A level classes, students with modest GCSE attainment find it hard to achieve the standards of which they are capable, despite systematic attempts by many teachers to match the work set them to their stage of learning. Therefore, at A level, it is generally the higher-attaining students who reach their predicted grades in the examinations.

23. Teachers make good use of support staff and learning resources to support the learning of pupils, but the use of information technology as an aid to teaching and learning is under developed across the curriculum and impairs pupils' progress. This weakness in provision is now particularly significant in the light of the heightened significance of information technology in the new National Curriculum.
24. Teachers generally assess pupils' work thoroughly and use marking to encourage each pupil to improve in ways specific to him or her. However, the quality of marking varies significantly; at best it is related to clearly expressed, short-term learning targets and leaves the pupil in no doubt as to what he or she must do to improve. The school's policy in this area is good and appropriate and, where applied, significantly aids pupils' learning. However, the marking of too many teachers is restricted to comments on the volume and neatness of work and is too vague in its congratulations and encouragement to help the pupil focus on what needs to be done.
25. Teachers generally use homework to reinforce or extend the work in lessons and follow the agreed homework timetable. However, a minority of teachers use homework simply to 'finish off' work set in class, a practice which can overload slower pupils and fail to stretch more able pupils. Some teachers do not follow the homework timetable, sometimes setting unexpected homework to be handed in the same week. This is bad practice; leading to unreasonable overload some weeks and insufficient work being set on some others.
26. Part D of this report gives many examples of very good, sometimes excellent, teaching and learning across all subjects, with the exception of information technology where teaching and learning are satisfactory.
27. The English department has made good strides in linking the work done with pupils in Year 7 to that done with these same pupils as part of the National Literacy Strategy in their primary schools. The English department has also, over many years, provided clear guidance to other departments on the teaching of literacy skills and, with the exception of science, these departments apply this guidance effectively. The mathematics department has linked its provision to the National Numeracy Strategy through joint work with a primary feeder school, lunchtime teaching of lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 and the holding of a numeracy summer school in the summer of 2000. There is an increased, and appropriate, focus upon practising mental arithmetic skills in mathematics lessons. However, the links between the mathematics department and other departments are under developed. Although mathematical skills in the use of graphs, data handling and analysis are taught in history, sociology, psychology, business studies and physical education, the mathematics department should take a lead role, in the way that the English department has done, in the promotion of a common whole-school approach to the teaching of numeracy.
28. As a result of the strong teaching, pupils generally make good progress. In 65 per cent of lessons seen the quality of learning was good and often very good. In only two per cent of lessons seen was it unsatisfactory.

29. Pupils work with concentration and effort and sustain a good pace. They show interest and enthusiasm and have a reasonably well-informed understanding about what they need to do to improve, although this varies depending on the effectiveness of the assessment procedures of individual teachers and the extent to which they give appropriate feedback and set challenging, short-term targets.
30. Both boys and girls generally make good progress throughout the school and in all subjects, although progress is slower in information technology and, at A-level, for many lower-attaining students. Pupils for whom English is a second language make generally good progress. Gifted and talented pupils make broadly satisfactory progress. The school is currently introducing a programme to improve provision for gifted and talented pupils across the school in order to accelerate their progress further, although it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this programme.
31. Pupils and students with special educational needs are usually effectively supported within classrooms but are occasionally withdrawn for extra individual tuition. They are also taught effectively in the support for learning department both individually and in small groups.
32. The quality of teaching by teachers in the support for learning department is very good overall and ranges from good to very good. Where teaching is very good, the teachers use questions very well, which make pupils think and use their problem-solving skills. This increases the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. The teachers' planning is clear and appropriate. For example, they use a specially prepared booklet, which is designed so that all the pupils in the group can read it, understand it and follow the instructions within it. The work challenges the pupils and is clearly related to the targets in their individual education plans.
33. The quality of work by learning support assistants is good overall. A good example of this was in a Year 8 mathematics lesson where the support assistants understood clearly what the pupils could do and could not do. They encouraged them to be as independent as possible but gave a clear explanation of how to continue with the exercise when they obviously needed help. They marked the pupils' work as they went around the group so that pupils clearly understood their achievement. The quality of teaching is inconsistent, and far less effective, when teachers have to plan work for all the pupils in their class, including pupils with special educational needs. The learning of pupils with special educational needs would be enhanced by sharper and more consistently used individual education plans.
34. Some teachers do not fully understand the terms used to describe the different specific stages which identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Some teachers do not understand the school system for using individual educational plans, or how to write targets for pupils within their own subject areas. This has an adverse effect on pupils' progress. Pupils make good progress when teachers plan specific work to address the pupils' targets in their individual education plans. For example, in a Year 8 art lesson for pupils who have difficulty with spelling, the teacher wrote words on the board for them to learn during the lesson and for homework, including 'subtle', 'accurate', 'surface textures' and 'surface patterns'. Pupils with limited verbal skills discussed the work, describing their feelings and considering how they could improve their work.

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

35. The curriculum is well managed. Since the previous inspection, progress has been made in broadening the curriculum experience of all students and in widening participation in extra-curricular activities. Strategies for improving numeracy are satisfactory and for literacy they are well developed. However, provision for information technology within other lessons needs further development.
36. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements except for religious education in the upper sixth form and information technology at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3, new pupils are integrated into Year 7 by good primary school links and by the common teaching of history, geography and religious education in seven-week blocks. The provision of drama lessons for all pupils at Key Stage 3 makes a valuable contribution and contributes to the good behaviour and social skills of pupils. The school has an active sixth form, which provides opportunities for students on an open access basis. The quality and effectiveness of sixth-form provision is reported in a later section of this report (paragraphs 78 to 84).
37. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. This is mainly because of the very good opportunities offered to pupils in the support for learning department and in those subject departments which make effective use of individual education plans. The school ensures that pupils of all abilities have equal access to the curriculum. There is a well-balanced programme of withdrawal and in-class support, appropriate to individual needs. Help is available for those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Curricular planning takes account of the needs of pupils with physical disability. Girls and boys play football in extra-curricular time. Discrepancies in achievement based on gender are identified and strategies are in place to address the issue. The school is careful to ensure that the heads of year and the form tutors are involved with advising each pupil about their curriculum choices, all of which are open to all pupils. No pupil is excluded from joining in school activities for financial reasons.
38. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good with an extensive range of activities on offer to pupils. This range demonstrates the strong commitment of the teaching and support staff to enhance the curriculum for pupils across the school. Sporting activities are a strength of this provision; there is also an emphasis on expressive and performing arts and music. During the course of the inspection a wide range of choral-focused activities, including the sign language choir, were observed. After-school and lunchtime clubs are actively encouraged and pupils' participation rates are high. The recycling club which meets before school is well organised, long established and provides a contribution to the ethos of the school in its focus on environmental issues. Its practical approach to recycling and to providing items for local playgroups and other organisations is commendable. Links with other organisations such as Rotherham Borough Council for Youth Parliament and business links for the GNVQ courses provide opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of citizenship and the world of work.
39. Support for homework clubs and the Support For Learning initiative are well received by pupils. Pupils from the Hearing Impaired Unit are included in many of these activities and arrangements are made to assist with their transport home after school if necessary. The fact that the vast majority of pupils live within the immediate area of the school supports the high participation rate in activities after school.
40. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The personal and social education programme in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is very well planned

and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Teaching is very effective in lessons and is underpinned by detailed schemes of work, which include appropriate aspects relating to personal relationships, bullying, drugs and sex education, safety and citizenship. The programme continues into the sixth form where outside speakers who have had direct involvement with a particular topic such as drugs, mental health, political exile, are invited into school to talk with students.

41. The Breakfast Bar is now in its second year and is supported by approximately 200 pupils and students per week from all year groups. It is very popular and provides opportunities for sharing experiences at the start of the day. The Pastoral Credit System aims to give more recognition for achievements and good behaviour and to raise the profile of achievement within the school. Pupils and students receive credits for meeting targets, taking responsibilities and showing initiative, outstanding attendance and punctuality and contributions to residential visits both at home and abroad. Awards are graded and students make good efforts to achieve the highest grades.
42. Sex education is supported through the science curriculum and the child development programmes. Drugs awareness teaching benefits from the regular input of ex-offenders who deliver a programme to Years 10 and 11.
43. The provision for work-related education is very good. A range of intermediate and advanced vocational courses is offered in the sixth form, together with some courses in Key Stage 4 which have a clear vocational element. Well-planned and monitored work experience is offered to pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 12, with appropriate preparation and feedback being a clear strength of the programme; work experience opportunities abroad are offered to Year 12 students. Additionally, a number of subject departments are developing work-related applications. Year 10 business studies pupils, for example, surveyed businesses in a local shopping centre in order to identify employment needs, whilst Year 12 students successfully take part on an annual basis in the Young Enterprise project, effectively working with advisers from the local business community. The 'Working Out' and 'Transitions' courses offer very supportive work-related programmes, tailored to the needs of individual students in the sixth form and pupils in Key Stage 4; the latter recently received recognition in a national survey of work-related education initiatives. The programme of work-related education is very effectively co-ordinated by a number of staff, including senior staff; they work well together as a team and ensure the school's continuing commitment to this aspect of the curriculum. The school's very extensive links with local industry and community organisations support work-related education.
44. The 'Transitions' scheme is a positive alternative for some pupils at Key Stage 4. The project is funded by the Rotherham Chamber of Commerce and the Training and Enterprise Council. The Transitions scheme is a particular type of provision directed at, and for the benefit of, unmotivated students and designed to create an encouraging environment which will help to facilitate the successful transition from school to employment. The scheme is making a difference to those pupils whose poor performance is also a part of their diminished sense of self-esteem. Many who have been excluded for disobedient or disruptive behaviour have been offered a vocational path and they have been successful. In the school, teachers maintain an overview of increasingly positive attendance and behaviour. On training programmes, regular liaison is maintained with training providers. Close contact is maintained with parents or carers and employers. All pupils involved in 'Transitions' have responded positively to the opportunities afforded. The social benefits gained for this group of pupils without exception are immeasurable. For example, raised expectations have

stretched each pupil's ability to the full. 'Transitions' is fulfilling all its aims and purpose and is helping pupils to make attainments far in advance of those forecast for them.

45. A partnership between the school and the Rotherham Managing Agency, supported in the beginning by the local Training Enterprise Council, has developed a vocational education programme in the sixth form entitled 'Working Out'. The majority of students benefiting from this programme are those with a special education need. The course offers a good vocational element to all Year 12 and 13 students as a part of their educational experience. Students' needs are being catered for as the programme is flexible. For example, students in Years 12 and 13 can complete a foundation or stage 1 level of the City and Guilds Communication and Numeracy skills. Students extend their information technology modules for the Intermediate Diploma of Vocational Education and gain the full Diploma. Year 12 students complete units of work towards this Diploma. The flexibility offered allows for change should the need arise. Students value this degree of flexibility in their programme. The school is providing a supportive environment to students with educational needs, which is assisting their personal development and helping to achieve their potential. Attainment levels are improving as a result of 'Working Out'. Students respond positively to the opportunities offered and enjoy the sixth-form environment of the school. Being a part of the sixth form has raised their self-esteem and confidence and has elicited excellent responses from all the students involved, even though their ability is stretched by being sixth-form students.
46. There are effective links with the community which enhance the curriculum and the good range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. These include the School Bank with sponsorship from HSBC, Project Trident for work experience and the Transitions programme. The school's application for sports college status has forged links with local sponsors and sporting clubs and associations. The range of links provide a good foundation for pupils to gain wider experience of non-school environments.
47. Pupils receive very good careers education and guidance. The careers programme is taught as units of work in personal, social and health education lessons in Years 9, 10 and 11 and includes preparation for work experience. There are good facilities for research into jobs, colleges and universities in the careers library and access to some very useful careers CD-ROM software. There is very effective support from the Lifetime Careers Service whose consultants attend parents' evenings and also provide good independent careers guidance to individuals and groups of students.
48. Overall the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. The school has moved a long way towards addressing the key issue highlighted in the previous report concerning collective worship. There is now a 'Thought for the day' which is a weekly programme of themes in tutor time. Delivery of this programme and use of the very good resources are, however, inconsistent. Within the curriculum, religious education makes an important contribution to the spiritual dimension of the school and further opportunities are provided in art and drama.
49. The provision for moral development is very good. Pupils are helped to distinguish right from wrong and teachers provide very good role models throughout the school. The school ethos imparts a sense of shared purpose that is reflected in the good behaviour of pupils. The moral development of pupils is sustained well in assemblies and in personal and social education lessons through discussions on abortion and

homelessness. In religious education pupils discuss issues such as euthanasia and racism. The physical education department cultivates fair play and sportsmanship. Pupils generally show respect for the views of others and feel comfortable about expressing their own ideas.

50. The provision for social education is also very good. Year 11 pupils and sixth-form students make very effective use of their respective common rooms for social activity during the school day. Assemblies encourage pupils to work as members of a group and to consider the needs of others. Many subjects provide contexts for pupils to work together in pairs or small groups in art, physical education, drama, music and personal and social education. Year 8 pupils attend a residential course at Glenbrook and there are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For instance, sixth-form students help in lessons with shared reading, help in directing the school orchestra and organise parties for senior citizens in the community. There are further opportunities through peer counselling, the recycling club and the amenities group.
51. There is good provision for pupils' cultural development. There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities to enrich pupils' knowledge and experience. History, religious education, art, English, dance, physical education and music teaching provide experiences for pupils that enable them to appreciate their own and other cultures. For instance, through art pupils learn about Japanese, African and Egyptian cultures. In religious education pupils visit a mosque and a Buddhist monastery. Multi cultural experiences were also the focus of One World Week earlier in the term which included a One World Lunch to which pupils contributed food from different parts of the world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. The school is a very caring community which provides a happy, secure environment for its pupils and a safe place for all. All staff are properly trained in emergency procedures for first aid. Fire drills are conducted regularly once per term and pupils know the routine to follow. All the appropriate fire notices and apparatus are in place and exits are clearly marked. The school is kept very clean. In classrooms, including laboratories, equipment is connected safely, and is regularly inspected. Physical education apparatus is in good condition and adequate safety precautions are followed during use. There are clear guidelines for reporting accidents to the school matron and logging the details. All staff have had emergency training and two members of staff are qualified first aiders. First-aid procedures are good and they are carried out effectively. The LEA performs a safety audit every term and deficiencies are remedied quickly. The designated staff regularly carry out a detailed risk assessment of the school site, and any concerns are addressed. The governing body undertakes regular reviews of security and buildings. The school provides a very good level of care for all its pupils and students. The health and safety policy is regularly updated and all staff have copies and are familiar with its details.
53. There is a designated full-time Child Protection Officer. There are a further two members of staff who also give effective support. The Staff Handbook contains guidelines on how to detect possible child abuse and the procedures to be followed. New members of staff receive training as part of the induction process. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very good and staff are well trained and sensitive in their application. The school follows the local area child protection procedures. There are beneficial links with outside support agencies in the protection of children. Good liaison exists with the Rowan Centre which currently provides effective joint support for pupils from the school. Other outside agencies involved

include Social Services, the LEA education welfare officer who visits the school every other day and makes a valuable contribution to ensuring satisfactory attendance, the Education Psychologist and the community police officer. There are good relationships between staff and pupils and these allow pupils to approach staff confidently with any personal concerns. The staff know the pupils well and take particular interest in their welfare. The child protection officer regularly attends case conferences for pupils on the At Risk Register and regularly attends appropriate courses. In some cases form tutors or other experienced staff attend case conferences for individual pupils with whom they have special rapport.

54. The local community police officer makes a valuable contribution and provides very good liaison between school and home. Good care is taken of pupils with dietary needs and meal provision allows for all requirements. All staff have had training in how to deal with pupils who have allergies and training in counselling has been provided to staff. The school has built ramps to cater for the needs of its pupils who use wheelchairs. Lessons are relocated to downstairs classrooms when these students join courses.
55. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' behaviour are very good. The school has developed a clear behaviour policy which is known by all and is applied consistently. Pupils are co-operative, show respect for the staff and have a very good relationship with one another which results in a very well ordered community. Staff generally provide very good role models for the students and lessons often proceed with a good sense of humour and enjoyment. Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are embodied in the policy on bullying. All students have a copy of the policy in their daily planners and have clear guidelines on what to do should problems arise. This reduces the numbers of exclusions resulting from unacceptable behaviour. The school has established very effective systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, including sanctions. The Pastoral Credit System awards credits for good behaviour as well as for academic achievements. Topics dealt with in personal and social education lessons give pupils good opportunities to discuss their behaviour and its consequences. Class teachers who know their pupils well provide good pastoral support. Supervision at break and at lunch times is very good. Twenty-two points are manned daily by a member of staff and at lunch times by a team of eighteen midday supervisors and members of the Senior Management Team.

56. Procedures for monitoring and supporting students' personal development are very good. Students are given the opportunity to exercise initiative; they organise fund raising for charities, such as the Children in Need Appeal, select their own plays and present well-attended plays. Some students on work experience take responsibility for finding their own placements, monitored by a member of staff. They take part in the Learning Mentoring Scheme which is very well organised by the three appointed staff mentors and makes a very significant contribution to students' personal development. Some older students have volunteered for residential training as mentors and offer valuable support to pupils in Years 7 and 8. The school offers a residential educational experience to Year 8 pupils where they develop social skills and work co-operatively. All Year 11 students are given the opportunity to join the Trident project which enables them to make decisions under guidance. Post-16 students are able to spend some time in school and some time in placements.
57. The school has satisfactory procedures to assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress. There is now a range of strategies and tests employed. Assessment of pupils' work is carried out through the national tests administered at the appropriate stage. The results of these tests are recorded in data banks which are now being co-ordinated by the assessment co-ordinator. Most teachers also monitor pupils' day-to-day work through their marking and records are kept in the teachers' planners. Teachers generally maintain good records through the term and carry out regular tests to track pupils' progress. The school carries out monitoring of assessment twice a year for each year group in order to ascertain the achievement of each student as well as to obtain a measure of the student's attitude and effort. The main purpose of the monitoring is to identify underachievement so that steps can be taken such as using the mentoring scheme to make improvement. Within the assessment and monitoring procedures, those for pupils with special needs are very good and are a significant strength. Prompt and accurate assessment is a key feature of the high quality special needs provision, and it ensures that these pupils make very good progress when they are withdrawn for support. Their needs are identified by a range of formal procedures, and the information is used very effectively to guide the design of pupils' individual education plans. Their progress is regularly checked against established benchmarks.
58. The use of assessment information is in its early stages and departments are beginning to set targets based on students' prior performance. They are aware of the results of the predictive tests used by the school but these are not being sufficiently used to improve attainment. The school is aware of the urgent need to review the system which has evolved in a piecemeal fashion and is taking steps to address this issue.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

59. Parents are generally pleased with the school and the opportunities it provides for their children. The school welcomes parents who feel that they can contact the school with their concerns. When necessary the school makes arrangements through the Local Education Authority for parents who speak little or no English to obtain translation and interpretation services.

60. Responses to the parental questionnaire suggest that a significant number of parents feel that they are kept insufficiently informed of the progress their children make at school. This point was raised at the time of the previous inspection. Detailed reports home to parents are in the form of Records of Achievement. These are informative but place too great a reliance on pupils' views of their own progress. The reports do not contain teachers' comments on specific strengths and weaknesses nor the targets the pupils should pursue in order to make progress. Parents receive regular and appropriate information on the achievements and efforts of their sons and daughters but, in itself, this is insufficient to focus the next stage of pupils' learning.
61. The school has fulfilled its legal obligation to issue a Home-School Agreement. The main source of regular dialogue between home and school, the pupil planner, is not used effectively, or consistently, across the school. When it is used well, comments by teachers to parents, and vice versa, provide an effective means of communication. However, in the majority of planners examined during the inspection neither parents nor tutors had signed them. In some planners parents had not responded to comments made by teachers who were actively seeking information or enlisting parental support.
62. The Home-School Association works hard at raising funds for the school. Teachers keep the group informed about the need for, and evaluation of, financial support to the school. The association works effectively in partnership with the school.
63. The school provides opportunities for parents to engage with the school at an early stage through the very well planned induction process for Year 6 pupils during which every family is offered an interview. Some parents are involved in assisting with sporting activities but as pupils move through the school parents become less involved in the day-to-day work of the school. This situation is unchanged since the previous inspection.
64. The school has a strong partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Communications between home and school are good and parents contribute to the reviews of their children's progress.
65. Teachers work hard to arrange effective parents' evenings. During the inspection, Year 12 and Year 7 parents' evenings were held. Some parents of Year 7 pupils consider that it is too long to wait until the summer term before meeting subject teachers although they acknowledge that they may approach the school before then with concerns on curriculum matters. The modern foreign languages department has recently produced a newsletter for parents. This is good practice which could be usefully replicated in other subjects.
66. The special educational needs co-ordinator has good links with parents through telephone and written contacts. The support for learning department also undertakes home visits. Parents usually attend annual reviews. If they are unable to do so the school invites them to make a written contribution.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The headteacher and his senior management team effectively lead the school in sustaining a curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils and students and a highly purposeful and effective ethos to which pupils of all ages and all levels of ability respond and contribute very well. They give clear and good direction to ensure that the school's stated values are reflected in its work. The school has recently introduced appropriate systems to monitor, evaluate and develop teaching but these systems are not yet enforced with sufficient determination, consistency or rigour.
68. The governing body broadly fulfils its statutory obligations and, through its committees, is sufficiently engaged in the financial management of the school and the monitoring of spending decisions. However, the governing body has an insufficiently strong grip on the effectiveness of the school, and of each department, in securing the best possible levels of attainment for each pupil and student. The management team should do more to provide the governing body with a full and rigorous commentary on the progress pupils make towards their challenging targets in each subject and, following tests and examinations, the extent to which each department has secured this progress. As a result of this weakness in monitoring and reporting, neither the governing body nor the management team yet have a sufficiently informed grasp of the data available to them on pupils' attainment and are, therefore, handicapped in their genuine determination to raise standards at the school even higher. For example, the school has not succeeded in interpreting and using its own data on the performance of students at A-level which clearly shows that lower-attaining students are under achieving in a large number of subjects.
69. However, the school has recently made significant strides forward in the monitoring of its own performance and the identification of its own weaknesses. The management team has shown, over recent years, that once it does recognise a weakness it is effective in remedying it. For example, the strategies to raise the levels of attainment of boys have had marked success. The school is also making promising progress with its very recent launch, under the Excellence in Cities programme, of a cross-curricular programme designed to raise the levels of attainment of able and talented pupils.
70. The school development planning process, although appropriately conceived, does not lead to the consistent pursuit of whole-school priorities, or the application of whole-school policies, in every department and classroom. Members of the senior management team are linked to specific departments and are well placed to ensure consistency. However, the school development plan does not encourage the rigour necessary to ensure compliance by departments. Although planning at the departmental level is sometimes good, it often lacks precision in, for example, maths, science, information technology and design and technology.
71. Financial planning and delegation systems are effective and although the headteacher, governors, administrative officer and management team take care to ensure the best possible value for money in their purchasing decisions, they are not systematic in the application of the principles of 'best value' in so doing. Effective use is made of technology in, for example, the computerisation of attendance registers.
72. The current timetable structure of six daily 50-minute lessons does not lend itself to good timekeeping or the best use of time in practical subjects, such as physical education. A longer period would suit practical subjects or, alternatively a shorter

period would make double periods a practical alternative. The lack of changeover time between periods one and two, three and four, and also five and six, inevitably means inefficient and ragged movement of pupils between lessons.

73. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching and support staff are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. The school has a core of teachers with many years experience and they are effectively deployed. There is a small, yet appropriate, number of classroom support staff who are effectively deployed and give good support to teachers. Teachers receive good support from technical staff. The administrative staff ensure the day-to-day efficient smooth running of the school, which effectively supports the management of the school. Staff are dedicated, loyal and caring and they work well as a team. There is a comprehensive and appropriate induction programme organised by the school for newly qualified teachers. Experienced teachers, new to the school, also follow some aspects of this induction programme, ensuring that they settle quickly into school life. The school has a coherent programme that effectively links the professional development of staff with school and department priorities but this coherence is not consistently reflected at departmental level. The school has made a good start on the introduction of performance management for teachers, although systems for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are not yet secure in all departments. Many support staff are not yet included in the performance management cycle. All teachers have attended performance management training. As a consequence teachers have already agreed their performance targets.
74. Significant improvements have been made across the school since the last inspection and as a consequence learning resources are satisfactory. Specific grants have recently improved the book stock across the school. History and geography are well resourced with an improved range of textbooks. However, weaknesses still exist in resources and textbooks in mathematics, music, and information and communication technology. Significant improvements have been made in library provision since the last inspection. However, the ratio of books to pupils is still below national recommended levels. The level of computer provision has improved and the ratio of computers to pupils is now 9:1, below the national average of 7:1.
75. The school has made significant improvements in its accommodation since the previous inspection. However, overall, the accommodation is still unsatisfactory and constrains the curriculum and depresses the standards of achievement and progress of pupils. There are examples of good accommodation. For example, parts of the art and drama areas offer good support for learning and there is also an attractive Year 11 common room. These areas enhance the environment and contribute to the school ethos. Effective display also helps to make some areas appear less dingy. However, these examples are substantially outweighed by the weaknesses in other areas. The teaching of mathematics takes place exclusively in temporary classrooms. This accommodation has leaky roofs, is insecure and temperatures vary from very cold to being oppressively hot. The storage of equipment and resources is difficult. These factors prevent the use of information and communication technology and as a consequence constrain learning. Much of the temporary accommodation fails to produce an atmosphere conducive to learning: temporary accommodation is worn and drab and creates a depressing atmosphere. Accommodation for science, art and for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is of insufficient size for the numbers of pupils that use it. Provision is also inadequate in history and modern foreign languages. Some science teaching takes place in classrooms, and not laboratories, restricting practical work. The sports hall floor is worn and without lines for a range of games; at times, the floor is slippery as a

consequence of a leaking roof. There are occasions, during wet weather, when the sports hall cannot be used. Recent changes in the sixth-form curriculum mean that there are insufficient areas to successfully support different subjects. Disabled access is denied to the second and third floor, which impacts upon the effective timetabling of the curriculum. The state of toilet provision for girls in the A Block is unhygienic and unsatisfactory. Despite improvements made by the school there has been insufficient capital investment in the school's accommodation and as a consequence it is unsatisfactory and does not effectively support pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. In order to improve further the standards attained by pupils and the quality and effectiveness of educational provision, the school should:

- (1) make consistent use of the data on pupils' prior performance and innate abilities so as to tailor teaching and learning to meet the needs of individual pupils in every lesson through the setting of learning targets and, subsequently, to monitor pupils' progress and the performance of departments and individual teachers, supporting and challenging where necessary (see paragraphs 29, 58, 67, 68 and 12);
- (2) sharpen the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs by specifying specific short and mid-term targets and, subsequently, ensure that all teachers incorporate these targets in their own lesson planning (see paragraphs 33, 34, 102 and 113);
- (3) further analyse and then address the issue of the underachievement of lower-attaining A-level students in order to ensure that the majority of these students attain the pass grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE performance (see paragraphs 8 and 22);
- (4) as resources allow, rectify the many deficiencies in the accommodation which impair the quality of education through the implementation, by the governing body, of a site improvement plan (see paragraphs 75, 123, 142, 151, 156, 186 and 195);
- (5) strengthen whole-school planning to include timed and costed improvement targets and apply the same discipline consistently across all departments (see paragraphs 70, 121, 135, 151 and 168);
- (6) develop the resourcing and teaching of information technology at key stages 3 and 4 in all subjects in order to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum (see paragraphs 23 and 164).

77. In addition to the key issues for action listed above, the school should consider addressing the following:

- sharpen the reports to parents on pupils' progress to include clear information on a pupil's strengths and weaknesses and his or her targets for improvement (see paragraph 60);
- restructure the timetable to allow time for pupils to transfer between lessons and to facilitate some longer teacher periods in practical subjects (see paragraphs 72 and 160);
- make arrangements to draw the one-person departments into the collegiate arrangements for mutual support, professional discussion and the implementation of whole-school priorities and policies (see paragraphs 215 and 218);
- instigate systematic performance management for all support staff, with associated provision for training and development (see paragraph 73);

- consider creating an earlier opportunity for parents of pupils new to the school to meet the subject teachers (see paragraph 65);
- repair or renovate the dilapidated girls' toilet in 'A' block (see paragraph 75);
- review the homework policy and the consistency with which it is applied (see paragraph 25);
- in the light of the school's success in exceeding its statutory GCSE performance targets in 2000, upwardly revise the targets for subsequent years (see paragraph 9);
- ensure that the school marking policy is consistently applied by all teachers (see paragraph 24);
- following the very good example of the English department and building on its own good work, ask the mathematics department to develop and implement a whole-school strategy for the development of numeracy (see paragraphs 27 and 125);
- ensure that the principles of Best Value are formally and systematically applied to major spending decisions by the governors (see paragraph 71).

THE SIXTH FORM

78. The sixth-form provision is well suited to the needs of the students and attracts significant numbers of pupils from other secondary schools. Students are offered a good range of subjects, and a good range of styles of learning. Appropriate courses have been set up for students of all abilities, from those with the highest attainment at GCSE to others who have attained only modest academic success.
79. The sixth-form provision has been successfully adapted to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. The new elements were put in place in good time for the start in September 2000. Students starting Year 12 in 2000 have mostly taken four main subject elements, from a menu of the new Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses and the adapted Advanced General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ). The numbers choosing the various main routes within the combinations show a thriving and diverse overall pattern of learning amongst the whole cohort of the sixth form. One main route is to rely on specific subjects. The school provides ample choice to students. There is a good range of subjects which run directly on from GCSE, such as English, languages, mathematics, art, business and so on. There is also an impressive range of subjects new to students, including economics, psychology, and sports studies. Another route used by a significant number of students is to focus on GNVQ. The school offers a satisfactory range including Leisure and Tourism and Health and Social Care. A strength of the overall provision is that the school has made sure students can combine the AS subject route with the GNVQ route. The school has started the new Key Skills elements somewhat late but this provision is made to be for all Year 12 students later in the current academic year.

80. The breadth of the provision has more strengths than weaknesses. The breadth is good in terms of the range of combinations being taken. A further strength is that both low- and high-attaining students can enter courses which can move them on to improved levels. However, many lower-attaining students fail to achieve the grades of which they are capable. Students using the GNVQ route choose from either Intermediate or Advanced level studies. Their choice is open and adaptable because the provision includes the maximum variety of either Part, Single or Full GNVQ Awards.
81. A few pupils join the sixth form to enhance their GCSE results, principally for English and mathematics. For some the learning is still a struggle. However, the outcomes for most are a valuable improvement to grade C and above. The school takes a lot of care to make a viable total package for these students, including the provision of an English GCSE curriculum which is not the same as that studied up to age 16.
82. A weakness in the breadth of provision is the omission of religious education in Year 13, with the further weakness that this is a statutory element in post-16 provision. The learning of students is enhanced by extension studies. The main benefits experienced by almost all include both community and work experience. Students organise Christmas parties for local elderly people. Work experience is part of some courses, and two weeks' experience is undertaken by all Year 12 students. Team sport is a major part of the provision for many students though there is no guaranteed recreational provision for all students. All students have sufficient access to good quality careers education and advice. Year 12 students all have a well-developed personal, social and health education programme and this element continues in Year 13 in tutor sessions. Some Year 13 students use an A level General Studies option. A major strength to the provision, for both Years 12 and 13, is the Working Out course. This course is evaluated in paragraph 45.
83. The school provides very good guidance about the sixth form. The preparation and decision times for Year 11 are handled very well. All pupils are given good quality information. Sufficient time is taken to explain the choices, for both groups and individuals. Considerable care is taken to finalise each student's individual programme, at intake. Personal and academic progress is monitored and guided very thoroughly by tutors, subject staff and overall by senior staff such as the head of sixth form. The process of pastoral care is planned in great detail. Tutors make very effective use of their daily meetings with students, with strong benefits to all in their group.
84. The leadership of the sixth-form provision is very effective. Students value highly the range of courses and are very confident about the high quality personal and academic guidance that they receive. They like the study facilities including access to computers, and the social life including very strong support for the accommodation in their sixth-form common room. Few students leave the sixth form before completing their studies. At the end of courses students make valuable and appropriate steps to further study or employment. The head of sixth form manages very effectively a large group of tutors who each carry a complex range of key duties of care for students. The school has effective systems to monitor, review and target improvement for sixth-form courses. The cost-effectiveness of the sixth form is good in that the proportion of staff hours used for the provision matches well with the income the school receives for the overall numbers of students. The sixth form is giving good value for money in terms of outcomes from the courses and the considerable gains in students' levels of achievement and personal development.

THE HEARING IMPAIRED DEPARTMENT

85. The hearing-impaired department located at Wickersley comprehensive school forms the Rotherham Local Education Authority (LEA) provision for secondary-aged pupils with a hearing impairment. The pupils are on the Wickersley school roll and Rotherham LEA funds the department. Currently there are 11 pupils in the department with pupils in all years from Year 7 to Year 13, apart from Year 12. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The degree of hearing loss ranges from moderate to profound. Pupils have individual specific educational needs, which mainly centre on the delay in the development of language skills connected with hearing impairment. This year, for the first time, there are pupils attending who use signing as their main means of communication.
86. Pupils take appropriate accredited courses and achieve success in them, including GCSE. The standards of pupils' work are often similar to pupils of a similar age in mainstream. For example, during their work on textiles in Year 11, pupils prepared good sketchbooks of their exploratory work showing samples of different textile techniques, designs and creative ideas. In a Year 11 science lesson, pupils made predictions, discussed different scales when making graphs, explained how a rheostat works and made a chart and graph of the results of their experiments related to electrical 'resistance'.
87. The department's philosophy is to enable pupils to work alongside their peers in the mainstream school as much as possible, whilst giving focused support for their specific individual needs in the department. These needs are mainly associated with the development of language skills, including knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structure. Pupils' standards in this area are usually below those of pupils of a similar age who are not hearing-impaired. To help pupils in this area, the department supports them with their ongoing work and prepares them to access future lessons by being 'clued in' beforehand. The support usually takes place on a one-to-one basis. The balance of support is decided on specific individual needs and is effective.
88. The quality of teaching in the department is very good overall. Where teaching is very good the teachers have high expectations of pupils' application to work, behaviour and presentation. Discussions reinforce and extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject and make pupils use and improve their thinking and intellectual skills. This leads to very good gains in learning and has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes, which are very good and sometimes excellent. Relationships are very good between adults and pupils. Where signing is used as the main means of communication, full discussion takes place about the pupils' work and this enables the pupils to think about how well they have worked and what they have learned. Where teaching is good, tasks are challenging and the teachers use questioning skills well to assess the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Lessons are brisk and intensive and this keeps pupils on task. Teachers ensure that able pupils are challenged. In all teaching a lot of discussion takes place in order to help the pupils, because they cannot easily access the incidental language that takes place within mainstream lessons.
89. The inclusion of pupils with hearing impairment in the mainstream lessons is good overall. However, occasionally teachers do not use aiding equipment properly or remember the need for these pupils to be seated where they can clearly see the teacher's lips.

90. The quality of support by learning support assistants is very good both in the department and in the mainstream situation. This is because the support assistants understand the specific needs of the pupils very well. They give appropriate help when needed but encourage independence.
91. Signing is very good and effective for pupils who use this as their main means of communication. The school has signing clubs for pupils and members of staff. The pupils' performance of carols through signing in one club had a beautiful spiritual quality.
92. The department supports the pupils to access the mainstream curriculum. Pupils take one modern foreign language subject rather than two, in order to gain the time for individual support in Years 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, pupils in the department take three options instead of four. Members of staff in the department often plan work with mainstream teachers. When necessary, the curriculum is modified to help the hearing-impaired pupils. Members of staff in the department sometimes plan work specifically for hearing-impaired pupils, which can also be used by other pupils in the mainstream situation. The department writes individual education plans for pupils. Some of the targets in these should be developed further, to make them small and achievable within a given time. Some pupils attend the extra-curricular activities including football, cricket and playing a musical instrument.
93. Pupils' statements are in place and are reviewed appropriately. There is good liaison with outside agencies.
94. The audiological facility for the service for hearing-impaired children in Rotherham is based in this department. This means that hearing-impaired pupils can have their aiding equipment repaired or replaced very quickly. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own equipment, improving their skills of independence.
95. Raising standards is a priority in the department and additional revision is planned to help the pupils studying for examinations. The department applies for special consideration for hearing-impaired pupils taking GCSE and Key Stage 3 examinations to enable them to have time to complete their work, and so adequately reflect their real achievement. Since the last inspection there have been good improvements, including an improved level of integration, increased involvement of mainstream teachers and improved planning of the placement of pupils who use sign as the main means of communication.
96. The department is working with Durham University to adapt a specific test for hearing-impaired pupils, in order to improve the accuracy of assessment and this year a video will be used to assess language skills.
97. The management of the department is very good and all staff in the department work very well as a team. Clear information is given to teachers to help them understand the needs of hearing-impaired pupils, especially in the classroom situation, but there are no procedures in place to have a 'link' to each department to ensure even better understanding. This type of liaison has not been fully explored. Staffing is good. There are three qualified teachers of the deaf, a qualified nursery nurse and a communication support worker. One teacher and the support worker have high levels of signing skills. The accommodation is satisfactory. The department have worked hard to improve the interior decoration and make adjustments to improve the lighting and acoustics. Resources are satisfactory but the department does not have any

personal computers which are compatible with those that the pupils use in the mainstream school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	222
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	92

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	21	47	28	1	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	1436	342
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	100	N/A

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	50	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	382	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	41

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	153	128	281

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	76	109	106
	Girls	94	91	86
	Total	170	200	192
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	61 (79)	71 (69)	69 (59)
	National	63 (69)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (38)	49 (37)	30 (22)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	29 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	108	86
	Girls	110	95	76
	Total	205	203	162
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (67)	72 (74)	57 (56)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	22 (31)	44 (41)	32 (30)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	138	135	273

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	64	134	137
	Girls	80	124	127
	Total	144	258	264
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	53 (52.5)	95 (92)	97 (96)
	National	49 (47.9)	89 (88.5)	94 (93)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	41.7 (39.8)
	National	38.9 (38.1)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	3	100
	National		N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2000	45	59	104

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All

School	14.6	17.5	16.3 (16.2)	3.3	3.0	3.2 (3.1)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (18.2)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (3.0)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	22	77
	National		N/A

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	38
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	1729
Any other minority ethnic group	6

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	44	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)	107.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 -Y13

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	542

Deployment of teachers: Y7 -Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.5%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 -Y13

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	22.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	3,926,053
Total expenditure	3,825,733
Expenditure per pupil	2,192
Balance brought forward from previous year	-70,591
Balance carried forward to next year	29,729

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate = 21%

Number of questionnaires sent out	1703
Number of questionnaires returned	360

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.
My child is making good progress in school.
Behaviour in the school is good.
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.
The teaching is good.
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.
The school works closely with parents.
The school is well led and managed.
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
39	51	9	1	1
41	53	2	1	2
36	53	4	0	6
25	50	20	4	2
32	54	6	1	7
23	49	19	5	5
41	43	12	1	3
54	40	4	1	2
27	51	10	1	10
35	51	7	1	5
35	51	7	1	5
34	47	10	1	8

Note: Percentages may not always total exactly 100 due to 'rounding' to the nearest whole number.

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents and carers are broadly supportive of the school and feel that it is effective and well-managed. However, a significant minority of parents is concerned that pupils receive either too much or too little homework. A significant minority wants the school to do more to inform parents of their child's progress.

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are concerned about the late timing of the Year 7 meeting of parents with subject teachers; the use of mixed ability lessons; the preponderance of temporary accommodation and the state of the girls' toilets in A Block

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

ENGLISH

98. In national tests, examinations and in work seen during the inspection, standards in English match the national average. On entry to the school, standards are below average. In 2000, the percentage of pupils aged 14 gaining level 5 or above in national tests was below the average for similar schools but above that average for pupils gaining level 6 and above. These results were in line with the national results for all schools. In the previous year, results were well above the national average and that for similar schools. The trend of results in tests over the last four years has matched the national trend except in 2000. There has been improvement in the results of boys compared with boys nationally but they perform less well than girls in the school by a wider margin than applies nationally. Results in English were lower than those in mathematics and science in 2000 but much higher in the previous year. In GCSE English in 2000, 49.4 per cent of candidates gained grades A*-C compared to 54 per cent nationally. In GCSE English literature, 50.7 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C compared with 63 per cent nationally but the proportion of pupils entered for this examination was higher than the national figure. Boys performed less well than girls in both subjects reflecting the national trend, although the gap is wider than the national difference despite efforts by the school to raise the achievement of boys. Results at GCSE were below the average attained by pupils in other subjects for which they were entered. At A-level in 2000, 32 per cent of candidates achieved grades A or B, which is close to the national figure, in English literature and the proportion attaining pass grades matched national figures. In English language, the proportion of pupils gaining pass grades was below average.
99. The attainment of pupils aged 14 and 16 in lessons at the end of key stages 3 and 4 is in line with the levels expected nationally. In Year 13, students attain standards which match expected levels though less securely in English language than in English literature. In Year 9, pupils at all levels of attainment read aloud willingly; most are accurate, but only a minority are fluent and able to demonstrate good understanding as they read. A few are excellent. When reading to gain information or to understand literature, most pupils are able to recognise significant detail and to form opinions. However, a significant minority is heavily dependent upon the guidance of teachers and what they learn from classmates in group discussion. From early in Year 7, pupils listen attentively to teachers and each other whether working in pairs, small groups or as a full class. This becomes a strength which contributes significantly to their learning in later years. Pupils in most classes speak clearly and confidently, knowing that their contributions are valued. At the end of Year 9, pupils' written work is of satisfactory quality. Higher-attainers are able to write in appropriate styles for a range of purposes. They draw upon rich vocabularies and vary sentence patterns effectively. Lower-attaining pupils communicate their ideas satisfactorily in recognisable sentences and paragraphs though some are not able to demonstrate how much they know and understand. They are able to write at length, though for this they often depend upon guidance from teachers on how to collect and organise their material. Pupils at all levels of attainment take pride in the presentation of their work, whether hand-written or word-processed on computers. The quality of the writing of many pupils, including some with otherwise good skills, is reduced by the frequency of errors of elementary grammar which are common in local speech and by misspelling of words in common use. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have made good progress in each of the skills of the subject. The balance of strengths and weaknesses remains the same. Pupils with special educational needs make good

progress because they benefit from specialist help, as individuals or in small groups, from opportunities to read to older pupils and because teachers recognise that they need additional help and encouragement. Teachers, however, do not have copies of individual education plans for these pupils, nor do they understand their responsibility for setting precise targets which will assist progress and also increase pupils' motivation. Pupils identified as having special talents in the subject make good progress because they have appropriate opportunities in most lessons to develop their skills at an appropriate pace. Occasionally, they are insufficiently challenged within mixed ability teaching groups.

100. The work of students in the sixth form is notable for the good quality of the analysis of texts, confidence in exploring ideas when working in groups and recognition of the need to relate judgements to evidence. These features are evident in most lessons and were particularly evident in a Year 13 class considering the different roles of Prospero in 'The Tempest'. At this stage, occasionally weak examples of written work result from the inability of some students to recognise the full implications of questions.
101. Improvement in the department since the previous inspection has been good. Strategies to improve levels of literacy have been developed further. The department has anticipated the planned extension of the National Literacy Strategy experienced by pupils in primary schools by introducing some of its elements into lessons in Year 7 so that earlier learning should be built upon. Greater consistency in teaching aims and methods has resulted from more systematic departmental discussion and sharing of good practice. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching noted in the previous report has been eliminated but there is still some evidence of failure to meet the individual needs of a minority of pupils within mixed ability teaching groups.
102. The quality of teaching is good. At Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth-form it is good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. They clearly identify what they intend pupils to learn in each lesson and how tasks are linked to previous and future work so that pupils understand the relevance of what they are doing. Lessons are well constructed and, especially at Key Stage 3, usually comprise a number of short, linked units which provide variety of activity and help to sustain concentration and a brisk pace. Teachers make skilful use of questions not only to measure understanding but more often to encourage pupils to express their own opinions so that they feel they are working with teachers and each other. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves is a strength of teaching and learning. It makes possible a confident sharing of experience and opinion and an ability to explore issues which improve learning and contribute to the personal development of pupils throughout the range of age and ability. These qualities are equally evident in sixth-form classes studying Shakespeare or considering gender issues in how language is used in conversation or preparing a presentation on coastal erosion in Year 8 based upon reading of a novel. Other good work was seen in geography and in research using newspapers, CD-Rom and the Internet or Year 7 discussing portraits before being introduced to the poems of Tennyson. Because the quality of relationships is almost universally good, pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations of their effort, behaviour and progress. In less successful lessons, teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to demonstrate how much they know and understand. Occasionally, pupils at the extremes of the range of attainment are not appropriately challenged. Teachers mostly employ effective strategies to assist the progress of pupils at all levels of attainment. There is, however, no evidence that pupils with special educational needs are supported by individual education plans

including targets that support their progress in the subject and help them to gain a sense of achievement. Homework is set regularly and relates well to work done in lessons. Marking and assessment usually indicate how pupils may improve their work further.

103. Teachers form a strong team which benefits from supportive leadership. There is appropriate delegation of responsibilities and sharing of experience which contribute to the raising of standards. The department recognises the continuing need to raise levels of attainment especially of boys and to consider how greater consistency may be established in meeting the needs of pupils at the extremes of the range of attainment.

Drama

104. Drama is taught to all pupils at Key Stage 3 and is a popular option at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The subject makes a considerable contribution to standards of attainment in speaking and listening and to the quality of pupils' personal development. Teaching is provided by specialists with contributions from members of the English department.
105. In 2000, 76.4 per cent of candidates achieved grades A*- C at GCSE, well above the national figure of 69 per cent. Results in recent years have consistently been in line with national results and pupils have gained grades close to the average of their attainment in other subjects for which they were entered. There has been an increase in the proportion gaining the higher grades at Advanced level since the previous report although it remains below the national figure. In 2000, all candidates succeeded in achieving pass grades.
106. Attainment in lessons matches national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 and is above it in the sixth form, particularly in performance skills. Pupils are able to plan, rehearse and perform with increasingly good awareness of how to communicate with an audience. From early in Year 7, they become able to evaluate their own performances and those of others so they can identify successful features and the means of further improvement. This was clearly evident in the identification by Year 13 students of possible changes to a very powerful presentation of aspects of schizophrenia. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are very good and enable pupils to explore character and emotions and to experiment with dramatic expression with confidence that their contributions will be valued. Pupils respond very positively to the very high expectations that teachers have of their work rate, behaviour and achievement. They have positive attitudes, work with enjoyment and ambition and so make good progress. Standards of behaviour are very good. Effectiveness of performance is sometimes reduced at Key Stage 3 by failure to project voices with sufficient clarity to be heard and understood satisfactorily.
107. Strengths identified in the previous report have been maintained. The quality of teaching and learning is now more consistently good. More appropriate emphasis is now placed on developing pupils' ability to evaluate their own performances and those of others.

108. Teaching is very good. It is occasionally excellent in the sixth form and never less than good in any of the lessons seen across the school. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise and clear understanding of the standards their pupils are to be measured against in end of course examinations. They are skilful in preparing pupils for tasks and rigorous in requiring them to take responsibility for making their own decisions. This high expectation was evident in all lessons observed. Lessons are well planned to build upon earlier learning and are conducted at such a brisk pace that pupils quickly learn to use their time efficiently. Teachers have good understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses and are careful to ensure that all pupils work to the limit of their perceived abilities.
109. The quality of the department's work results from dedicated leadership which provides effective support for all who teach the subject and schemes of work which skilfully establish a firm base in Year 7 upon which to develop pupils' skills in future. The school is fortunate to have two specialist drama studios but such is the demand for the subject that these are insufficient. Leaking roofs have also created a need for redecoration. These adverse features of accommodation reduce the quality of learning of some pupils.

Literacy across the curriculum

110. Standards of speaking and literacy, reading and writing match national standards and show continuing improvement from the time pupils enter the school. Improvement results from the school having established strategies which for several years have been practised by almost all subject departments; the development of paired reading schemes so that younger pupils read to older students; a reading club; and the quality of the specialist support provided for pupils with poor skills in reading. The school has an effective co-ordinator for literacy development who has been well supported by representatives of most departments.
111. Teachers of almost all subjects demonstrate good awareness of some features of the National Literacy Strategy now being established in primary schools and this is reflected in departmental documents and practice. The main exception is science. In Year 7, pupils have at least one lesson of English each week which specifically aims to continue the kinds of learning experienced at Key Stage 2.
112. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils understand, use and correctly spell technical terms and other language often employed in their lessons with examples of very good practice being noted in history and mathematics. In many subjects, pupils are taught to identify relevant details in texts they read and to use annotation or highlighting. Teachers give clear guidance, increasingly by providing writing frames, on how pupils should organise their writing especially of longer pieces. Although rarely in religious education or science, teachers ensure that pupils in each key stage have frequent opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and also their knowledge and understanding when working in groups or as whole classes. Very good examples were noted in drama and some English and history lessons. Pupils benefit from encouragement to read aloud and from hearing teachers read to them in a number of subjects. There are inconsistencies in the marking of inaccuracies in pupils' writing and in using the school's strategy for improving spelling.

113. Teachers have information about pupils with special educational needs involving literacy skills and the areas of concern for each pupil. Although teachers use a variety of strategies to support these pupils, many are unsure of how they might contribute to the setting of precise targets within each pupil's individual education plan and how they might most effectively assist in their achievement. Because of these uncertainties, the quality of the provision for the literacy development of many pupils with special educational needs is reduced.

MATHEMATICS

114. On entry to the school pupils' standards of attainment in mathematics are broadly in line with the national average but with relatively few pupils attaining very high or very low levels. Standards achieved in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 have been above the national average for the last three years for pupils of level 5 and above but at the national average for pupils attaining levels 6 and above. The standards which pupils attained were in line for those in similar schools. There was very little difference between the performance of boys and girls over the past three years. In 2000, pupils' tests results in mathematics were higher than those which pupils gained in English but slightly below those they achieved in science. Attainment in GCSE mathematics in 2000 was above the national average in the achievement of A* to C grades and better than that in similar schools. This performance was similar to that of previous years. Girls did better than boys, although the difference has been reducing for three years. There were few A* and A passes reflecting the intake in Year 7. At A-level the pass rate was broadly in line with national averages but with approximately 40 per cent of students achieving an A or B grade, higher than the national norm.
115. In lessons observed at Key Stage 3, the standards are in line with the nationally expected level by the end of Year 7 but above the expected level by the end of Year 9. In Year 7, where pupils are taught in mixed ability classes, pupils of average ability do well. They practise basic numeracy skills and cover most of the National Curriculum targets at sufficient depth. The most able pupils, however, are not stretched sufficiently and continuity and progression of the mathematics learning experience from the primary school is impaired. Pupils of below average ability find the work difficult and are hampered by a lack of confidence in basic number work. Many do not know their tables and have little confidence in their mental numeracy skills. Pupils are setted in Years 8 and 9 and the work seen reflected the pupil's ability. The pupils of above average ability produced some work of a high standard in algebra and in calculating ratio. Pupils of lower ability were able to practise their skills in arithmetic well and gained in confidence. There was a lack of work on investigating mathematics throughout the key stage and a lack of work using computers. This was also a criticism of the last report. Pupils with special educational needs do well when they get extra help. All pupils are good at explaining their work in well-argued sentences and are keen responders to questions.
116. In lessons at Key Stage 4 pupils attain above average standards. Pupils with higher levels of prior attainment achieve well with some good work seen on the volume of prisms. Pupils with lower levels of prior attainment also do well. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in smaller classes and are given effective extra help with mental tasks and the work is designed more to cope with the individual learning difficulty. There is a wide difference between the teachers in their effective use of pupils' individual education plans. Pupils of all abilities still lack confidence in investigating mathematics. Presentational skills in both Key Stages are not high. Some pupils, especially boys, come to school ill-prepared for work with no suitable

writing implements. Many instances were seen of writing in pencil and drawings in biro, sometimes without a ruler. Examples were seen of exercise books that started off neatly, deteriorating in standard as the pupils worked through the books.

117. Attainment in sixth-form lessons is average overall with good standards seen in the further maths classes on differential equations. In the A-level classes where there is a wider spread of ability attainment standards vary considerably although the students who got low grades at GCSE cope well if they put in the required effort. Students who are re-sitting the GCSE examination work hard, especially on aspects of algebra, as do those working on the numeracy element of GNVQ. Standards in these areas are satisfactory.
118. The department has achieved satisfactory improvement since the last inspection especially in teaching. There has been little improvement in the use of computer technology but there have been improvements in the standards of numeracy. Good examination results have been maintained.
119. Teaching is generally good or satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is now linked to the National Numeracy Strategy and innovations are now being trialled in year 7 to teach to a topic, similar to a primary school, in an effort to help both the most and least able pupils. The effectiveness of this innovation has yet to be judged. Lessons are well planned and teachers are given freedom to teach a group of topics in their own way within a time scale. Little evidence was seen of teacher co-operation when teaching parallel classes. The teachers used the word wall well and used the appropriate mathematical language in their teaching.
120. The teachers are all good mathematicians and have collated a number of extension tasks for the able and talented pupils. Homework is given out and collected in regularly and marked. However, the general standard of marking is very variable. In the best examples everything is marked either by the teacher or self-marked by the pupil, whilst other examples showed page after page of unmarked work. Calculators were used efficiently in a lesson on solving an equation by trial and error but instances were seen of inappropriate use and opportunities to practise numeracy skills were missed. Support teachers were a great help but it was noticed that on some occasions they spent a significant proportion of the lesson listening to the teacher teach and only became involved in the second part of the lesson. Opportunities were lost by not involving these staff more in the teaching role or using them in a more useful support role. Many instances of shared textbooks were seen and there were a lot of photocopied worksheets. The pace of the lessons was good as were the relationships between the teachers and pupils. Good order and discipline were a feature of all lessons. There was good continuity with a proper balance between revision and new work and the work set progressed properly in its level of difficulty. Pupils, however, needed firm guidance as their initiative and level of personal study skills were not high.

121. There is a clear scheme of work linked to attainment targets and levels and a series of termly tests, which allow teachers to judge the progress pupils make and so adjust the sets accordingly. Teachers have their own way of assessing standards and progress within a class but there is a need for a standardised marking scheme so that information on pupils is more interchangeable and pupils have more idea of their standard and progress in National Curriculum terms and in relation to other pupils. The assessment scheme only has a small effect on curricular planning when it highlights failure in a test, but it does not influence long-term decision making nor does it monitor pupils' day-to-day progress. The department does not keep a folio of pupil's work nor is there any exemplar material linked to National Curriculum attainment targets and levels on display in the classrooms.
122. A dedicated, hard-working teacher who is supported well by a motivated group of teachers leads the department. There is a department development plan and there have been considerable innovations over the past few years including better links with primary schools; a lunchtime club for Year 7 pupils of low ability; a summer school for end of Key Stage 2 pupils with National Curriculum levels below 4; a key skills numeracy course in the sixth-form, and an input into the schools' literacy project with a topic on the history of mathematics based on Internet research. The department's plan, however, is not linked closely enough to the school development plan nor is it costed, given a time scale, or responsibility attributed to a specific member of staff. There is no department handbook which could tie together all aspects of the department's work.
123. The standard of accommodation and the lack of resources inhibit many of the planned innovations. From the outside the temporary classrooms look extremely depressing. Teachers have made a lot of effort to make the insides attractive and welcoming. The rooms are draughty and damp and sometimes too hot in summer and too cold in winter when the gas heaters are blown out by the wind. The damp adversely affects books and other equipment. There is a lack of storage room and the rooms are not secure and so valuable and attractive articles like computers, televisions and video recorders cannot be stored safely. There is no area which could be used as an office or a meeting point for staff. This has a serious detrimental effect on teaching and learning. Resources are very limited with a lack of books in all classrooms and less than 50 books in the school library. The lack of computers inhibits the teaching of mathematics and what teaching there is, is not linked into the scheme of work.

Numeracy

124. The mathematics department has links with the National Numeracy Strategy, which have led to an increase in the teaching of numerical skills. There is a lunchtime group of pupils with low attainment levels in mathematics in year 7 who have extra practice in number. There are strong links with the primary feeder school and there is a summer school for pupils with attainment target levels below 4 who will be coming to the school. Last summer over 60 pupils took part. In the sixth form there is a key skills course with an element on number. There is more attention on practising mental skills in mathematics lessons.

125. However, there is no whole-school numeracy policy and no teacher with the responsibility to co-ordinate one. Hence, links between the mathematics department and other subject areas are not strong and there are insufficient links with the information technology department. Where numeracy skills are in evidence they are used well. In the special needs area pupils study numeracy leading to a support for learning certificate, and statistics were seen used with graphs, data handling and analysis in history, sociology, business studies and physical education. In A-level physics some high quality number work was seen in a lesson on mechanics.

SCIENCE

126. Attainment in science for the current Year 7 entry to the school is in line with the national average. Attainment by age 14, the end of Key Stage 3, is in line with the national average, as reflected in the 1999 tests. The proportions of pupils attaining level 5 and above and level 6 and above, were both in line with national averages and those for similar schools. Attainment in the end of Key Stage 3 tests in 2000 was better. For example, in 2000 the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 and above was above that reached in similar schools. Over a three-year period, 1998 to 2000, for tests at the end of Key Stage 3, 1999 was the relatively weak year, though still satisfactory.
127. All pupils study for the Double Award GCSE. Almost all pupils take the examination. In 1999 all those entered attained a grade. The proportion that year attaining A*-C grades was well above national averages, and significantly better than the proportion attaining these grades in similar schools. There has been a steady improvement in the proportion attaining A*-C grades over several years. The GCSE results in 2000 were significantly above national levels, even though just below the 1999 levels, for the proportion of A*-C grades. The school's GCSE results in science in 1999 were above those in English and mathematics. The attainment of boys and girls in science is broadly equal at the ages of 14 and 16, in line with the national picture.
128. Attainment by the end of the sixth form for Advanced Level sciences was better than the national average in 1999, especially for biology and physics. Results for 2000 were good, though not as good as those for 1999. Overall results in chemistry are significantly below those for biology and physics, and below the national average. This is mostly because students starting A-level chemistry with an average GCSE of about C grade did not achieve appropriately high A-level grades. In A-level biology and physics also, lower-attaining students often do not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable. There is no consistent difference between the attainments of boys and girls at A-level for these subjects. The current level of attainment for pupils of all ages is broadly in line with national expectations. Reasonable targets to improve further are to increase the proportion of pupils attaining level 6 and above in the tests at 14, and to bring attainment in A-level chemistry up to the standards now attained in A-level biology and physics.
129. Pupils' attainment in science, in relation to what should be expected of pupils and students, is generally satisfactory. The attainment of girls and boys is good by the end of Key Stage 4. The work seen in lessons, and found in samples of work was equally sound, during both Key Stages 3 and 4, for all of the elements of National Curriculum science.
130. Pupils' achievements in literacy and communication are satisfactory. There are wide variations. For example: excellent achievement because the focus on key words for

science, both oral and written, is sometimes very effective so that even middle-attaining pupils use words precisely. However, at other times, a rambling approach by the teacher led to pupils using vague language. Achievements in numeracy are good because there is plenty of calculation and use of graphs.

131. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards. In lessons teachers know which pupils have special educational needs, and take reasonable care to promote their involvement. Overall, during both Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils with special educational needs cover the same ground as other pupils and cope well. Special attention is given during Year 9 and throughout Key Stage 4 to provide extra support for pupils with more complex special educational needs. This work is very effective and leads, at best, to very good progress for these pupils. The school is also starting to give additional support to pupils identified as able and talented. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this provision. However, in a Year 11 class with significant numbers of such pupils, they made very good progress in understanding about genetic diseases and genetic engineering, well enough to organise oral presentations to a high standard. The benefit to all pupils in this class came from the pressure for them to take responsibility for their own learning about a complex issue. Achievement by a Year 12 A-level student for whom English is a new additional language, is satisfactory but there is insufficient support to secure steady progress or even to make sure such matters as instruction in safe practice is unambiguously understood. Levels of students' achievement in the sixth form are satisfactory except in chemistry.
132. Science is now stronger than it was, as reported in the last inspection. Attainment by age 16 is better. Work during Key Stage 3 is better. Teaching is much better because less than satisfactory teaching is now very rare: it was found in 20 per cent of lessons in 1995. Teaching is no longer so narrow, scientific investigation is promoted effectively, and care is taken to develop pupils' use of language. The department is still well organised, links with primary schools are well in hand, and support for learning for Year 9 pupils with special educational need is now very effective. Accommodation was good but is now unsatisfactory. A key issue in the last inspection, 'to complete risk inspections in science lessons', has been completed satisfactorily.
133. Teaching and learning are both good overall. Teaching and learning are generally good or very good during both Key Stages 3 and 4, and satisfactory in the sixth-form. Teaching was good or better in close to three-quarters of the lessons seen. Some teaching in Key Stage 3 was excellent. Unsatisfactory teaching was very rare. Sixth-form teaching includes some activity which is fairly routine, and sometimes the teacher provides information without sufficient checks that pupils are gaining enough understanding. This links to signs of underachievement for the current Year 13 chemistry A level, as measured in the trial run examinations at the end of Year 12. In contrast some of the teaching leads to excellent learning, such as the project work by Year 13 physics students. They all completed detailed and rigorous analyses of the mechanics of Alton Towers' rides. Learning was excellent because the physics was at top A-level grade, the underpinning mathematical analysis was very good, and students considered broader issues effectively. Teaching provided for classes from Key Stages 3 and 4 is expert; teachers expect a lot from pupils, teaching methods are effective, and pupils' work rate and motivation are good. For example, a top set in Year 9 gave complete attention to every word of the teacher and they followed points made by other pupils as the teacher drove individuals step by step to precise answers to tough questions. High-attaining pupils, and some able and talented pupils, made very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Also in Year 9, low-attaining pupils,

including many with special educational needs, made very good progress in a lesson where two teachers teamed up to ensure sufficient attention was given to individuals. In Key Stages 3 and 4 ineffective use is made of individual education plans, so that learning objectives related to specific aspects of special educational need are not taught effectively. An overall strength for all teaching for these key stages is homework, which is useful, regular and enforced, and the impressive quality of the teachers' expertise.

134. The science department systems have important strengths, and significant weaknesses. The strengths are the effectiveness of the setting arrangements for pupils after Year 9, which enables teachers to meet well the different needs of pupils. Teaching is well served by comprehensive, accurate and detailed assessment records. The curriculum overall for science is strong but it is not sufficiently strong in the provision for opportunities to consider the ethical and social dimensions of science, nor of aspects of science in cultures, both our own and beyond.
135. The department analyses what steps it should take to improve progress, and to address school priorities. However, the implementation of these steps is weak because proposals lack timescales, omit costs such as for training and development time and do not spell out who will do the work. Some of the strategies noted are too woolly. The process by which schemes of work are reviewed and made more useful as the basis of planning is weak. The approach to planning a scheme for the introduction of the Advanced Subsidiary level for Year 12 is to issue the examination board syllabus, even though the department has concerns about how to cram the new course into a time allocation less than given to the previous A-level syllabus. Staffing and resources levels are sufficient to sustain the work which the department undertakes. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory with old, well-worn laboratories. Some laboratories are too small to sustain reliable, effective coverage of modern coursework.

ART

136. The 2000 GCSE results in art show a continuation of the upward trend in achievement that the department has maintained in recent years. Results are now close to the national averages. At A level in 2000, results were well above the national average with a significant increase over previous years in the number of students achieving the higher grades.
137. The work seen shows that at Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils achieve the standards expected nationally in both main areas of the subject. A significant proportion achieve beyond this standard and these findings are endorsed by end of key stage teachers' assessments. Pupils make good progress in the use of formal elements and develop a good range of drawing and painting skills. Regular homework supports development and encourages individuality. As the result of planned work and class exercises, pupils show a sound knowledge of technical vocabulary. The combination of printing and computer work, based on Japanese designs, and the mixed media approach to mask making are good examples.

138. At Key Stage 4 pupils attain good standards, although lower-attaining students often do not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable. Much work is based on independent learning and experimentation and individuality of approach is successfully encouraged. Work seen shows skilful use of a variety of media, and a wide range of artistic competencies in drawing, painting, printing, ceramics and textiles. Pupils have easy access to computers as a source of stimulus and exploration, and use this medium confidently. Pupils have a broad knowledge of the work and style of other artists and this influence is clear in their own work. The extensive work in portraits and the introduction to abstract art in Year 10 are good examples. Work in ceramics is also well developed and the creative work in Year 11 inspired by Egyptian mythology demonstrates high level skills of construction and decoration. Pupils with special needs are well integrated and make good progress. Increasingly good use is being made by the department of individual education plan targets to aid personal development and a range of worksheets is being developed with language that is accessible to all.
139. Levels of attainment in Years 12 and 13 are very good. Independent learning and the range of research and experimentation are impressive. Preparatory work is prolific in many cases. Many students demonstrate high levels of competence in representational drawing skills and well-composed, imaginative and highly personalised painting styles. The mixed media work on natural forms in Year 12 is a good example. Work in textiles is also developed to very high standards and demonstrates impressive skills in design, application and quality of finish.
140. Across the school, pupils' behaviour and their attitude to work are good. They are quick to settle and have good organisational skills. Working relationships are good. Equipment is used and shared sensibly. Many are confident and articulate when discussing their work. There is much enthusiasm for the subject and many are appreciative of the creative and personal advancements they have made. Whilst work planned in the department does much to extend the spiritual dimension of art education through discussion of artists and other cultures, opportunities for reflection in lessons could be used more effectively.
141. The quality of teaching overall is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and is generally very good in the sixth form. Standards and the quality of learning were markedly improved where clear aims, a variety of teaching methods, and high expectations of pace and output were evident. In some lessons at Key Stage 3, teaching had less impact on learning where pace was undemanding and no clear deadlines were set. The end of lesson review, reiterating aims and identifying strengths and weaknesses, is rarely used effectively. Marking is regular, informative and helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work. Information learned from pupils' assessments is not used, however, to inform curricular planning or to add relevant information to the annual report to parents. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, individual target setting and regular meetings with the teacher to discuss and track progress have been effective in raising standards. However, more able pupils are still insufficiently challenged. Strategies aimed at addressing these unresolved issues need to be more sharply focused.

142. The school has addressed some of the issues for improvement identified in the last report. Resources are now adequate to suit the needs of the curriculum and changes concerning the delivery of Key Stage 3 and post-16 curriculum have been successfully implemented. The department is well led by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist. Through hard work and good planning, a stimulating, orderly, though cramped, working environment has been established in which creative thinking and high levels of achievement are encouraged. The central display area is used very impressively as a stimulating gallery space and as an essential overspill area for large group and post-16 students. A wide range of high quality displays adorns the walls of classrooms. Displays of work and a wealth of prints feature prominently in corridors and public areas. High standards have been achieved across the key stages despite the lack of sufficiently long lessons and the inadequacies of accommodation which are constraints to further progress and productivity in a practical subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

143. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades GCSE A*-C matched the national average overall in full courses in design technology. Seventy per cent of pupils achieved grades A*-C in Food Technology which was well above the national average, 50 per cent achieved grades A*-C in textiles which was above the national average, and 20 per cent achieved grades A*-C in electronic products which was well below the national average. In addition, all pupils follow a short GCSE course in resistant materials for which no comparable national data are available. Thirty-three per cent gained grades A*-C in the short GCSE course in 2000. Although girls achieved results well above those of boys, no boys followed courses in food or textiles and no girls followed the course in electronic products. At Advanced level, all students passed the textiles examination and five of the six students entered gained A or B grades. In resistant materials, all students passed but none gained A or B grades.
144. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the national average. Pupils have a good knowledge of the materials they use in all aspects of the subject which enables them to make well-informed choices about the products they design and make. For example, they can modify recipes in food technology or choose appropriate materials to make adjustable stands to hold mirrors or reading materials in resistant materials lessons. Pupils have good graphics skills which enable them to communicate ideas clearly and to supplement writing which is adequate but often dependent on teacher support. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and these contribute significantly to the standards they reach. This is particularly evident in presentation of work and the good quality finish which pupils produce in practical work of which they are proud. Pupils have an average knowledge of the design process and use this to develop products which they evaluate and then suggest possible improvements.
145. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is average in relation to national standards. In resistant materials short courses, which all pupils follow, standards of practical work are higher but performance in written examinations is below average. Pupils have a good knowledge of the tools and materials they use and produce well-finished products from wood, metal and plastics or a combination of materials. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate good design skills, for example when they make clocks with decorative features or storage furniture to solve practical problems. They have a good knowledge of how to join materials and take pride in the products they make. Pupils follow the design process appropriately and evaluate their work to suggest

possible changes they might make to improve it. In full GCSE courses in food technology and textiles, standards are above average but relatively few pupils, all girls, take part. They have good knowledge of the function of the ingredients they use and this, together with a satisfactory knowledge of the underlying scientific principles, contributes to the successful making of food products and enables pupils to reach high standards in practical work. In textiles lessons, pupils demonstrate creativity and have good construction skills. Standards are below average in electronic products in Year 11 because pupils had insufficient experience in Key Stage 3 to prepare them adequately for the course. The department has recognised this and has taken steps to improve the situation, including the appointment of a specialist teacher, so that standards are rising. In consequence, Year 10 pupils have average skills and knowledge of electronic components and systems which they use to construct circuits to make novelty electronic alarm systems for refrigerators. In the newly introduced graphics course, standards are above average for formal drawing and sketching in Year 10 because pupils build effectively on the skills and knowledge they have acquired in earlier years.

146. Attainment is satisfactory overall in the sixth form and in textiles it is good. Students benefit from the inspiration of observing the good work of previous students which stimulates ideas and models for good standards. Most students demonstrate flair and imagination and have good standards of practical skills of construction and use of surface decoration to create special effects with textiles. In resistant materials, students have a satisfactory understanding of consumer needs and wants and recognise good and bad design features in products. In both resistant materials and textiles, students have mature attitudes to learning which have a positive effect on improving standards.
147. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others in lessons because teachers are aware of general areas of concern and provide work which is appropriately challenging. The lack of individual education plans prevents pupils from making appropriate progress towards specified targets.
148. In more than half the lessons seen teaching was good, in one quarter it was very good and in the remainder, never less than satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they communicate effectively to pupils. They encourage pupils to think for themselves so that by the time they begin their examination courses they have responsible attitudes to learning and to managing their coursework. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations teachers have of them and listen attentively in lessons and concentrate so that the quality of learning is good. In the most effective lessons, teachers explain tasks clearly and relevantly, building on previous learning and ensuring that pupils know what they are aiming for in future lessons. Occasionally, lesson objectives are not made clear enough and pupils fail to grasp the value of the tasks they are doing in relation to what they need to know about materials and processes. Pupils are well organised and teachers are good role models for them in this respect. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and treat them with care and consideration. Teachers assess pupils' work on a day-to-day basis so that both pupils and teachers are aware of the attainment and progress pupils are making. In creative aspects teachers use inspirational methods which are highly motivating for pupils; for example, when Year 9 were observed designing objects using wood very effectively.
149. Although the curriculum covers the attainment targets for the subject, pupils do not have sufficient experience of electronics in Years 7 to 9 to prepare them for examination courses. The curricular content in Year 9 is inappropriate for providing

pupils with experience to enable them to make to make informed choices in Year 10. The focus on resistant material for all pupils in Years 10 and 11 represents an imbalance of provision for pupils. The current provision for all pupils to take short courses in resistant materials prevents pupils from achieving the full GCSE award in the subject. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' speaking and listening and in writing for a variety of purposes. It makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of mathematical skills and pupils are encouraged to use computers for research and to present their work effectively.

150. Teachers assess pupils' work appropriately and use the information they gain to provide suitably challenging work for all pupils. For example, they provide tasks of different degrees of difficulty in food technology in Years 7 to 9 and pupils are aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working at and what they need to do to improve. Teachers use information from tests to identify the potential levels that each pupil can reach, to set targets and to monitor progress against these expectations. This is particularly helpful in Years 10 and 11 when pupils are studying for examination courses and has led to the department recognising weaknesses in preparing pupils to take written examinations, and developing strategies to improve them.
151. The quality of leadership is good overall but there are some weaknesses. The head of faculty and subject heads provide clear direction for the work of separate subjects but there is insufficient coherence of the subject as a whole. This results in missed opportunities for teachers to reinforce skills and concepts in all aspects of the subject. There are adequate resources to teach the subject but not enough updated, modern equipment to present the subject as a 'leading edge' technology area. Teachers are generally well deployed to teach to their experience and expertise. When non-specialists contribute to the teaching of resistant materials they do so effectively. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The workshops are elderly and impair the quality of learning. Despite this, teachers make a good effort to display the work of pupils to inspire others. These displays make a positive contribution to the department's effort to raise the attainment of boys. Since the previous inspection there has been improvement in the quality of teaching and to standards of practical work. The curriculum has been extended to include full GCSE courses in graphic products and electronic products.

GEOGRAPHY

152. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C is above the national average in 1999 when nearly two-thirds of candidates achieved these grades. Results at post-16 are in line with national averages. Compared with other subjects in the school the geography results are close to the average but above the national average. A-level results have fluctuated over the past four years but show an upward trend in the percentage achieving grades A* to C. However, lower-attaining students often do not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable. The results for 2000 show a continuing upward trend at both key stages. Although the school results show underachievement of boys compared to girls there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in geography. This is a result of the department's effort to reduce the trend by introducing all-boys, classes in Year 10 in recent years.
153. The standard of work seen, for pupils at the age of 14, is above the level expected nationally. Pupils know that maps are an essential tool of geography and can give accurate six-figure grid references for a specific location. They understand how relief

maps are constructed and produce models of landscape from contour lines. They appreciate the need to reconcile human activities with the environment in their study of the Peak District National Park and natural hazards including flooding in England, and the Kobe Earthquake in Japan. They build on the good foundation laid at Key Stage 4 and by the end of Year 11 students have a good grasp of the complex relationship between the natural environment and human activity. For example, they apply cost benefit analysis to the problem of flooding within the United Kingdom as well as in India. They apply relevant skills to investigate urban land use, the Central Business District, the Green Belt and New Towns. By the end of Key Stage 5 students make studies of relevance to the world of work such as Leisure and Tourism and use information technology to make presentations to a variety of audiences. They gain experience in planning investigations and analysing statistics when examining urban decline in Sheffield City centre and offering solutions to regeneration.

154. Pupils make good progress from a below average attainment at entry, to being in line with expectations nationally by the age of 14. They make satisfactory progress throughout their time in school and achieve standards above national averages. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have acquired a good foundation of geographical ideas and applications and this enables them to make satisfactory progress toward the standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in withdrawal classes but receive insufficient additional support in their geography lessons and this inhibits the good progress made elsewhere. In the work seen there is no significant difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. GCSE and A-level results having risen year on year, resources have increased and schemes of work have been updated to satisfy the requirements of Curriculum 2000. However, more systematic use of information technology should be made by students to enhance their learning.
155. The quality of teaching overall is good with some examples of very good teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Where teaching is good or better teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge so that pupils and students receive accurate information, obtain clear understanding of the principles involved and acquire new skills in dealing with geographical studies. The teaching of basic skills is good and students recognise the need for accurate use of scales, a key and other features of map work. They understand how to interpret landscape features by analysing contour lines and can make relief models from the information on O.S. maps. Good teaching in the department is also characterised by enthusiastic delivery which stimulates the interest of the students and motivates them to make good intellectual efforts to solve problems. However, there are some occasions when opportunities are missed to challenge pupils to think for themselves. The management of students is a strength of the department and the relationship between staff and pupils is very good. This good relationship, including a sense of humour, is conducive to effective learning and pupils and students generally work at a good pace and do not waste time. Homework is well used in the department to reinforce learning.
156. Leadership and management in the department are very good and there is a shared commitment to raising standards. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject, by staff and students alike, and this contributes to a good learning environment for the subject, enhanced by colourful displays reflecting the range of topics studied. The curriculum on offer is broad and balanced with a range of extra-curricular opportunities offered including residential fieldwork, a geography club and opportunities to benefit from the work of the regional geographical association in which the head of department takes an active part. Resources are good overall with

good provision of maps, textbooks and audio-visual aids. Urgent attention however needs to be given to the accommodation especially in C block where teaching and learning are impaired when rain falls through the roof into the classroom.

HISTORY

157. Attainment is above average at all three stages. In comparison with similar schools progress is good and pupils achieve well. This is the result of good teaching, good behaviour and a willingness to learn, backed by very good learning materials.
158. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the school average, as shown in teachers' assessments, and just above the national average. It is in line with attainment in similar schools, on a rising trend over the past few years. Attainment in GCSE has been above the national average in the last four years and rising, except for the results in 2000, which fell unexpectedly to below average. Although this result was disputed with the examining body, and improved on remarking, further measures to improve students' writing and research skills have been adopted. At A level, attainment has been consistently above average over several years, with most students achieving at the higher grades, with only a minority of lower grades. However, lower-attaining students often do not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable
159. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress and achieving well. Pupils in Year 7 acquire a good grasp of basic chronology and are able to use historical sources well. They speak and listen well and show considerable interest in history. Starting in Year 7, they make progressive use of information and communication technology, from simple news-sheets up to full reports with graphics and the use of the Internet by Year 11. One Year 7 class was able to extract valuable information about the local village over two hundred years ago, by analysing parish registers, and, using graphs very well, was able to produce relevant statistics about local occupations. Teachers apply the agreed strategy to improve literacy standards by the use of key words and writing frames and with vocabulary checks using dictionaries, supplemented by good wall displays of key words and phrases. Pupils of all abilities are helped to learn by very well-produced materials. In one Year 8 class the teacher helped the class to consider whether the 'Romans were civilised', using three sets of materials, one for the more able, one for the middle range and one for pupils with special educational needs. The latter make good progress in mixed ability classes as a result of good teaching, which builds their individual learning needs into the lesson plan to make more effective use of well-prepared materials. Standards are above average and achievement is good in the classes preparing students for the GCSE. As a result of the options system, the numbers taking history in Years 10 and 11 are lower and ability levels higher, than in year nine. Students make good progress in extending their written skills and in the analysis of documents. They are able to use information technology, including the Internet, to research topics. They respond well to good visual material. One Year 10 class was able to understand the problems faced by Britain in 1939 by viewing relevant video clips and photographs of aerial bombardment. In the sixth form, students make very good progress in studies in depth, enjoying working on detailed documents, as required by the syllabus for Year 13. The new requirements for the AS level in Year 12 demand a broader treatment and less intensive studies in depth. Students of more mixed ability are currently making good progress, against the uncertainties of the precise requirements of the examining board, which makes judgement of standards difficult for teachers and students alike.
160. Teaching is mostly good or very good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers are

very well qualified and experienced, keep up to date very well, and because of the practice of delegating curriculum development for each year, teachers become specialists in certain years or in certain topics. Sixth-form teachers, therefore, can specialise in the French Revolution or British Working Class Movements, whilst a Year 7 teacher can specialise in local history. Teachers use group methods, simulations and discussion to draw students into more active participation. They are skilled in handling mixed ability classes, in both helping students of lower ability and in setting extra and more demanding tasks to stretch the more able. One Year 10 class, studying the Vietnam War, was stimulated by the same well-produced booklet to produce written work, but extra tasks were set for the more able. Teachers use performance data well and mark work thoroughly to be able to inform students of their exact grades and to motivate them to achieve higher grades. Students, when questioned, were able to give their target grades. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils and students are an important contributory factor in their progress. A few lessons, however, start late and the remaining time is too short a period to complete the work as planned.

161. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen steadily, the monitoring of teaching and learning has become more effective and resources have considerably improved. Good progress has been made in implementing the appraisal system by the head of department. The curriculum has been reviewed to bring it in line with current National Curriculum guidelines and the monitoring of student achievement also takes place by action of the head of department. Resources, particularly those which cater for differing abilities, have been extended. Special government funds have been well used to greatly improve the range of specialist textbooks, particularly for the more gifted and talented. Assessment is now more consistent and is used in planning new schemes of work. The department's accommodation, however, is only barely satisfactory.
162. The department is well managed. An ethos of sharing and co-operation is fostered amongst the very well-qualified and experienced staff. Planning is good and is related to whole-school policies, incorporating clear strategies for literacy, numeracy and information technology. Resource preparation is a shared activity, resulting in very good materials and schemes of work. The non-specialist teacher is very well supported in this environment with teaching materials, and, in turn, contributes fully to the department's teaching and resourcing. The head of department plays a strategic role in monitoring teaching and learning. Data is effectively used to chart individual progress and individual education plans are known and acted upon by teachers. The department has clear development plans for the future and has the capacity for further improvement.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

163. At the end of Key Stage 3 in the last two years, the teachers' assessments show that the pupils' attainments in information technology (IT) are around national averages, with more than half reaching the target Level 5. In lessons seen at Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment was broadly in line with national expectations. Almost all the Key Stage 3 pupils are entirely at home with the basic general use of computers; they know all they need to know about the use of the mouse and windows, how to save work to, and load from, floppy discs, and how to obtain a printout. During the key stage, they meet a wide range of computer software and gain at least basic word-processing skills and spreadsheet knowledge. Indeed, they meet all the National Curriculum expects them to meet, though not always in the most appropriate circumstances and rarely with enough opportunity to practise and extend new skills and knowledge. There

is no difference between what girls and boys can do in IT in this key stage and pupils with special educational needs are working at the same levels as other pupils.

164. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' results at GCSE are in line with national averages, with around half reaching or surpassing Grade C. The large majority of the pupils working for and entering GCSE are boys. Many of the candidates gain a satisfactory knowledge of the uses of IT in the business world, although fewer do so as regards industry. Most pupils also develop their skills with software to a satisfactory level. The software they use most is for word-processing, including related programs such as PowerPoint and 'desktop publishing', but very few become fully adept. In particular, most do not see word processing as a specific means of communication, and therefore do not choose the most appropriate layouts and styles for given audiences; nor do they find out about the more advanced techniques. For instance, almost all are able to insert graphics - pictures into pages of text and frames around the pages - but it is not common that the pictures are the most relevant or that the design of the frames relates to the context. All the pupils on the GCSE course meet the full range of theory and practice with software required by the National Curriculum, but the other pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not - only those with special educational needs follow an IT course where they reach satisfactory levels of attainment but cover limited ground. The limited opportunity afforded to Key Stage 4 pupils in the other subject areas is not planned with the IT National Curriculum in mind and there is little encouragement for them all to see IT as an exciting and valuable tool for their learning in every context. For these reasons in particular the School does not yet meet National Curriculum requirements in IT at Key Stage 4.
165. In the sixth form, the school offers A-level courses in the subject. However, until recently the numbers have been low and very few girls study the subject. In recent years about two-thirds of the candidates have passed at Advanced level, which is below the national average. Lower-attaining students often do not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable. In lessons, the students' work in IT is mostly up to national expectations: they generally gain a satisfactory understanding of how people work with computers and communications, but are less secure about specific examples, such as in banking and the supply chain, and how the Internet works. They also gain a satisfactory level of skills in working with software to solve problems related to those of 'real life', but very rarely shine in these skills.
166. The quality of IT teaching throughout the school is always satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 lessons it is usually good, with the teachers of different subjects bringing energy and variety to their IT-based lessons and often making a good effort to help the pupils learn well in IT as well as in those subjects. For instance, for a Year 9 maths lesson, the teacher had designed a graded series of activities taking the pupils from negligible knowledge of spreadsheets to a good understanding of working with formulas. In a history lesson, also in Year 9, following a very clear and careful demonstration, the pupils learned quickly how to work with pictures and to choose one to insert into a block of text. At Key Stage 4, the teaching of the GCSE IT course is satisfactory - the teachers have a good grasp of the subject and its implications and applications. However, the lessons rarely show much whole-class interaction between teachers and pupils or enough pace to keep the latter involved and motivated. There are also some lessons in other subjects in which IT is the main method for delivering aspects of the work. The quality of teaching in those few cases was good or very good - as in a Year 10 science lesson using a BBC computer linked to a motion sensor to help the pupils with the difficult concepts of speed/time graphs. Learning is good in almost all the IT-based lessons in the other subjects in both key stages. However, there are too few of these lessons; in almost none of them is there a working computer for each

pupil; the lessons' content is as yet too weakly co-ordinated for the pupils to retain what they learn of IT, let alone to develop it and there is little encouragement for focused IT work outside of lessons. None of the IT and IT-based lessons show a sufficiently clear grasp of the use of learning objectives to allow the teachers and pupils to focus on the tasks concerned and to assess the quality of the learning.

167. In the A-level IT lessons the teachers ensure good pace and show good knowledge of their subject, as well as of its links to the thinking and concepts of business studies, design and technology, and economics. Apart from the lack of focused planning, there is also a tendency for the teachers to adopt a 'lecture' style when they find the students not responding well to their questions, suggestions and thoughts. The outcome of this, again, is difficulty for the teachers and the students to assess the quality of learning and for the teacher to tailor the work to meet specific needs.
168. All but one of the teachers who teach the GCSE and Advanced courses spend more time in other departments, and the same is true of the many teachers who sometimes base a lesson or set of lessons on pupils' working with computers. There are two support staff members in the library area who provide much help in the IT-based lessons that take place there, one being particularly effectively involved in IT teaching. The head of department does not have responsibility for all the IT teaching and facilities in the school but is charged with co-ordinating the cross-curricular work at Key Stages 3 and 4. The co-ordination and assessment systems in place at Key Stage 3 are generally appropriate and effective, and the use of assessment data is good in the way it leads to individualised target-setting and monitoring. Similar systems are moving into place in Key Stage 4 where appropriate, though as yet the only good practice is in the GCSE classes in information technology.

169. The school has similar levels of IT equipment as other schools. However, there are often technical problems that prevent full use. The school has no rooms with enough computers for the members of all classes using them to have one each and many of the computers are not compatible with the school's network. Most of the many rooms in the school that hold suites of computers are too small for the purpose which tends to lead to dangerously over-crowded conditions, furniture that is often inflexible and ergonomically unsatisfactory, and temperatures so high that some pupils struggle to stay awake.
170. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in developing its hardware and network facilities, though the problems mentioned above continue to be significant barriers to their effective use. The range of software skills on offer to the pupils has increased, though there is still too much word processing in comparison with the use of other program types. The IT assessment systems were inadequate before, but are now on the way to becoming a real strength.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

171. Attainment on entry of pupils is in line with national averages. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards are good in French, German and Spanish. This is borne out through lesson observations, scrutiny of work and test results. Girls achieve better than boys, but the gap is closing.
172. At GCSE in 1999, the 75.4 per cent of A*-C grades in French was well above the national average. In Spanish 43.3 per cent of A*-C grades was just below the national average. Despite an increase of 5 per cent in the top grades in German to 29.5 per cent, this was well below average. Results in 2000 show a marked improvement, with all three languages well above the national average. Target setting lower down in the school is beginning to have a beneficial impact on results.
173. Success continues at A-level in the three languages. However, some lower-attaining students are not achieving the results they are capable of, according to standardised tests, especially in Spanish. Wider use of these at an early stage of post-16 studies would help in raising grades.
174. In all three languages, the use of the foreign language is encouraged. In several lessons pupils answered the register using vocabulary from the current topic such as animals, or means of transport. Good pronunciation and intonation are encouraged and pupils are able to expand on minimal answers. Pupils have been taught how to listen for important key words and phrases required in answers. There are opportunities for independent reading, using readers and magazines and pupils can access languages using software in the library resource area. Written skills vary according to ability. More able pupils can produce detailed descriptive writing, which includes ideas and opinions.
175. Language learning can be fun. A Year 8 French lesson on nationalities involved everyone in a team game of whispers. There was excitement, anticipation and concentration as each team tried to score. Pupils made rapid progress in a Year 9 Spanish lesson where caricaturised visuals produced much humour and the enthusiasm of the teacher swept the pupils along. Everyone wanted to attempt to describe a friend and coped well, thanks to the structure and delivery of the lesson. Pupils in a lower ability German group followed careful instructions which enabled them to successfully build up a facial image. Challenging materials in a Year 11

Spanish lesson on accidents made pupils think and reason for themselves. High expectations on the part of the teacher, along with encouragement in a Year 11 French class on transport, saw the confidence of the pupils visibly increase, so that by the end of the lesson all were keen to answer. Students in the sixth form were able to discuss the problems of drugs in French, using a high degree of fluency, difficult vocabulary and sentence structure.

176. Setting enables lessons to be planned to suit ability levels. Differentiation is mainly by outcome, with extended tasks for the more able and worksheets for special educational needs pupils, where appropriate. Pupils are well behaved and well motivated. They work well as a class and in groups or pairs.
177. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Pupils' at all key stages are using the foreign language more confidently. They are responding well to challenging work and high teachers expectations. Differentiated work allows pupils to work at a suitable level. Resources have been purchased to enable independent learning to take place. More extensive use of standardised tests as performance indicators would help in forward planning and target setting, with a view to raising standards even further.
178. Teaching is generally good or very good at all key stages. Teachers are role models in the use of the foreign language. They display good subject knowledge and use a wide variety of strategies. This adds to the interest of lessons and maintains the concentration of the pupils. Ideas are shared and the team works well together. The foreign language teaching assistants work well with the teachers. A learning support assistant effectively helped a pupil with hearing impairment. Languages' teaching would benefit from the wider availability of support assistants, particularly with lower ability groups. Lessons are well planned and paced. Pupils respond to the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers. This is shown in class response and in the standards of work produced. Homework is regularly set and marking is consistent and thorough. Reports are detailed and highlight strengths and weaknesses of the pupils alongside future targets. Arrangements for the subject meet the national requirements.
179. The department is well led by a committed team leader, with clear aims and targets. She is supportive of her staff. Departmental documentation is detailed and policies follow the whole-school pattern. Departmental meetings are held regularly and minuted. Good use is made of finances and bids for equipment are prioritised. With the advent of performance management, a lesson is used to monitor teaching. Time permitting, all members of the department would benefit from the opportunity to observe other lessons. Accommodation is inadequate and temporary accommodation is in a poor state. Despite this, posters, pupils' work, marking criteria and useful grammatical information on wall displays, help to enhance the learning environment. Displays of work and photos in the library and foyer help relive holidays and exchanges abroad. These are run regularly. Year 12 students complete work experience abroad, in a variety of placements. There are day workshops in other institutions and links with schools.

MUSIC

180. In 1999 and in 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving the grades A*-C at GCSE was well above the national average. Results over the last three years have been consistently high with more boys achieving grade A* in 2000. Three students were entered for A-level in 1999 and achieved grades A or B. Results for 2000 were less good but over the last three years results have been consistent with most students achieving A or B grades.
181. By the age of 14 standards of attainment in lessons are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils have good listening skills and their keyboard skills are developing well. However, composing skills are underdeveloped because the work set is insufficiently challenging. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were learning to co-ordinate both hands successfully on the keyboard to play the melody and an accompaniment to 'Super trouper'. In a Year 7 lesson pupils could identify different instruments heard in extracts of music and use music vocabulary well to discuss changes in mood. Higher-attaining pupils have good knowledge and understanding of Italian terms of expression used in music. No significant difference was observed between the attainment of girls and boys. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress in lessons where work is differentiated and time is efficiently planned.
182. By the age of 16 pupils attain average standards. In Year 11 pupils' attainment in composing is satisfactory overall. Pupils can compose well-structured and coherent pieces. Some pupils have effectively used computer music sequencing software for composing and notating their compositions. In a Year 10 lesson pupils showed good knowledge and understanding of technical terms used for different musical textures. All pupils taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11 receive instrumental or singing tuition and this has a very positive impact on all aspects of their work. Attainment in the sixth form is good. In Year 13 students have very good analytical skills and good knowledge of string quartets by Haydn and Mozart. Students in Year 12 were effectively applying their knowledge and experience of ensemble playing and composing skills when assessing realisations of compositions for the new Advanced Subsidiary level course.
183. Since the previous inspection GCSE results have improved. The number of students taking music in Year 12 has increased significantly and includes two pupils from another school. Two new computers have been bought and there are now sufficient keyboards for pupils to share. The audio equipment in each classroom is now of a good quality. More percussion instruments have been bought but there are still insufficient pitched percussion instruments.
184. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory or better in all lessons seen. In the sixth form it is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use their own instrumental skills effectively to help pupils make good gains in their learning and to provide good role-modelling. Very good management of pupils and high expectations of behaviour result in pupils sustaining concentration and staying on task. Teachers make frequent and effective use of music vocabulary, which reinforces pupils' knowledge and understanding of musical terms. Materials and tasks are mostly very well adapted to meet the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment with the result that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress by the end of the lesson. However, there are too many 'listening lessons' in Key Stage 3 and many missed opportunities to involve pupils in practical music activities in which performing, composing and appraising skills are integrated. This results in fewer opportunities for pupils to practise and develop these skills and a lack of variety in

lessons. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and are well behaved in lessons. They work well together when sharing keyboards. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are good.

185. Departmental leadership is good. There are good procedures in place for monitoring teaching and learning in class music lessons but there is no formal monitoring of teaching in instrumental lessons. The department development plan appropriately reflects the school development plan but the identified priorities are not yet sufficiently time-related. There are good procedures in place for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' work. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and assessment data is used effectively to match materials and tasks to pupils' different levels of attainment including those with special educational needs and able and talented pupils. The department has worked hard to produce differentiated materials for listening activities and keyboard work. The music curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and includes good opportunities for pupils to develop instrumental and listening skills but insufficient planned opportunities to develop singing and composing skills. Units of work for Key Stage 3 do not always include clear learning objectives and a range of activities that integrate performing, composing and appraising. Also they do not yet include opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to enhance their learning. Strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills are very good and include the use of writing frames, glossaries and research projects.
186. Accommodation for music is satisfactory overall but there are insufficient small practice rooms for small group work in composing and performing and for pupils to record their GCSE and A-level work. Resources are insufficient and inadequate for the department to meet the National Curriculum requirements for information technology at Key Stage 3 and to meet the needs of GCSE and A-level candidates. There are two computers but only a few keyboards have onboard music sequencers for developing composing skills and some have keys that are too small for pupils to develop their keyboard skills effectively.
187. Extra-curricular provision is good and has a very positive effect on developing pupils' performing skills. Many pupils take part in extra-curricular activities and the department is a hive of activity at lunchtimes. Instrumental tuition provides opportunities for pupils to learn to sing or to play a wide range of instruments. However, the take-up of these opportunities is low given the size of the pupil population. Many pupils successfully develop their performing skills by participating in activities such as band, orchestra, the choirs including a signing choir, clarinet group and the music technology club. Pupils also have opportunities to take part in school concerts and productions and the Young Musician of the Year Competition sponsored by local music businesses.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

188. In the 2000 GCSE examination, the number of pupils achieving A*-C grades was significantly above national averages; similar results were achieved in 1999 and 1998. Although a larger proportion of boys take GCSE, there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment. GCSE results compare very favourably with the results they achieved in other subjects. In both 1999 and 2000, A-level results were broadly in line with national averages although lower-attaining students did not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable. However the small cohort entered makes statistical comparisons invalid.
189. By the age of 14, most pupils attain standards in line with national levels; this is

confirmed by teachers' assessments. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show competence in a range of games, for instance netball, basketball, and football. Pupils apply the rules fairly. High-attaining pupils show spatial awareness and begin to use depth and width in team games, for example in basketball and hockey. Pupils understand some of the simple physiological changes that occur when they warm up; they understand the reason for stretching is to minimise injury and maximise performance. In Year 9 basketball, high-attaining pupils show correct techniques of lay-up shooting but low-attaining pupils have difficulty making a lay-up shot on the move. They know dribbling violations; for example, double dribbling and travelling illegally with the ball. In dance, Year 9 girls use ideas in order to produce group dances. They make dance movements related to the shuffling and fanning cards in their dance routines making use of movements in canon and unison. High-attaining pupils begin to show good posture, gesture and start to make use of different levels. In work seen during the inspection, the standards achieved by pupils aged 16 are well above the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils studying GCSE physical education achieve significantly higher standards. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, officiate in a range of games, for example netball and rugby. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of the rules and the violations, for example incorrect footwork in netball and basketball. Year 11 pupils in football show very good use of width and depth in both attack and defence and individual skills of screening and calling for the ball are well developed. Skills and games concepts are well developed and applied very successfully within a full game. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated into lessons and receive good support by teachers and their peers.

190. Pupils studying GCSE show simple understanding of the Health and Safety at Work Act and the implications for a sports centre employer with regard to employees and centre users. Observation of homework shows pupils have a good understanding of ten safety issues of a sports centre; many pupils make use of information and communication technology in order to enhance the presentation of their work. They have a broad outline of the advantages and disadvantages of sponsorship in sport. High-attaining pupils explain the benefits of tax deduction as an advantage for the company. Pupils studying GCSE successfully develop their understanding and expertise in both theoretical and practical aspects of the subject.
191. Timetabling constraints in the sixth form limited the number of observations made. There is no practical or recreational physical education in the sixth form. The AS- and A-level courses are theoretical courses only where the standards achieved are broadly in line with the level expected of pupils of the same age nationally. This is confirmed by the recent examination results. Students have secure knowledge of the way carbon dioxide is transported about the body; they draw diagrams to illustrate gaseous exchange in the muscles and tissues. Studying the history of physical education and physical recreation students are aware of the impact made by Oxford and Cambridge universities and public schools in the development of sport.
192. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The majority of the issues have been successfully addressed. Standards of teaching and learning have improved and as a consequence standards of attainment and GCSE examinations results have similarly improved. Assessment has been successfully developed; although further development is now required to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. The extra-curricular programme has been extended for a range of pupils including the gifted and talented pupils. Extra-curricular activities show significant improvements. The development of creative aspects of physical education remains underdeveloped.

193. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in both key stages and in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection and teaching is often very good. The quality of teaching combined with good teacher-pupil relationships has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers show good and, at times, very good knowledge and understanding and they apply this very successfully which has a positive impact upon pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, very good knowledge of football linked with good diagnosis and fault correction challenged pupils and as a consequence extended their skills and understanding. Similarly, in Year 9 dance, good quality work was a consequence of the application of very good knowledge. Teachers usually have high expectations of both effort and behaviour of pupils, as illustrated in Year 10 and 11 rugby lessons. Pupils work hard and maintain their efforts and concentration and persevere in order to produce their best results. However, on several occasions, low expectations, insufficient challenge and pace constrained progress, for example in Year 9 basketball. Teachers make effective use of questions and answer to recapitulate and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, during a Year 8 hockey lesson the teacher probes and challenges pupils' understanding of depth and width in attacking play. Long-term planning and organisation are good and ensure progression and continuity from year to year. However, lesson planning does not always include sufficiently clear learning objectives for teachers to evaluate teaching and learning. Good relationships, good subject knowledge and effective evaluation ensure all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress in their learning. Teachers make use of information from individual educational plans in order to adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual pupil's needs. Pupils make good progress from Year 7 through to Year 11. The small cohort in the sixth form continues to make good progress in their examination course.
194. The head of department shows good leadership and management of the department with clear educational direction. Curriculum, assessment and policy documents are clear. The development plan is satisfactory although it is not fully updated for Curriculum 2000; it is not costed, pupil outcomes are insufficiently outlined and deadlines are insufficiently clear. Targets are directly related to the school's development plan as well as additional departmental targets. The department offers a good and varied programme of seasonal extra-curricular activities for all pupils. The high standards of school teams extend the curriculum provision. Team representation successfully challenges and extends the gifted and talented pupils. Assessment procedures are good and very clear. New procedures are evolving in order to assess pupils by levels in the different physical activities as defined by Curriculum 2000.

195. Assessment data is well used to track pupils but it is in need of further refinement. Accommodation for physical education is satisfactory with good and less good features. The sports hall floor is well worn and without lines for a range of games; at times the floor is slippery and unsafe due to a leaking roof, which adversely impacts upon teaching and learning, especially in badminton. The monitoring of teaching is undertaken within the department by the head of department. However, regular, systematic monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently developed in order to share good practice and focus on improved pupil outcomes.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

196. End of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 2000 indicates that 80 per cent of pupils are working in line or beyond the expectations of the key stage. Girls are achieving higher standards than boys. Standards at Key Stage 4 are in line with national averages.
197. All pupils now study the short course GCSE and in 2000 results were above national averages with 82 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades. Girls achieved higher grades than boys. In the 1999 GCSE results were in line with national averages. Overall, pupils' results for the full GCSE in 2000 were in line with national averages. All entrants in 1999 and 2000 were girls. In 1999 A-level examinations, 80 per cent of pupils gained A to C grades. In 2000, 28 per cent of pupils gained A to C grades and 70 per cent of pupils gained A to E grades. These results are above the national averages, but lower-attaining students often do not attain the lower A-level grades of which they are capable.
198. Pupils' achievements and progress by the end of Key Stage 3 match and often exceed expected outcomes set out in the recently arrived Rotherham Agreed Syllabus for religious education. By the end of Year 9, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, show a good understanding of Christianity and other world religions, such as Buddhism and Islam. They recognise that religious faith affects the way people live their lives, and how they approach moral decisions. For example, pupils in Year 9 pupils looked at the moral issues of war. Good teaching in this lesson gave pupils the opportunity to reflect and express their own personal opinions about suffering and death.
199. At Key Stage 4, pupils studying the full course are attaining standards above the national average and making good progress. They are able to apply religious insights into a range of moral issues, such as those surrounding the sanctity of life. They are able to compare and contrast Islamic and Christian beliefs when discussing life after death. Students studying for A level are working at expected levels and are making good progress. Students recorded and discussed Theodices in relation to 'solutions to the problems of evil'. They have learned about free-will defence, dualism and despotism and they have researched theories by Irenaeus, Swinburne and Saint Augustine, finding strengths and weaknesses in the theories.
200. The quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory at Key Stage 3, good at Key Stage 4 and very good at Key Stage 5. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject. In most lessons, they know what they wish their pupils to learn, and communicate their aims clearly to them. In one Year 9 lesson where the teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, pupils were not given enough guidance as to how to complete tasks and the lesson lacked pace. In one Year 7 lesson, where the teaching was excellent, the good pace was set by the teacher, relationships were very good and this led to

pupils being enthusiastic and willingly sharing thoughts and ideas about the Chinese religion, Yin and Yang and the celebration of the Chinese New Year. Teachers pay good attention to the differing needs of pupils, structuring tasks accordingly. For example, writing frames are clearly presented and tasks are open ended. A copy of new words relating to the lesson is printed out for each pupil. Teachers set homework, which extends work done in class. They are supportive and help pupils to understand how to raise their attainment.

201. The department should continue to be aware of the underachievement of a small minority of boys at Key Stage 3. For example, in one lesson seen, six boys were reluctant to engage themselves in tasks. Although the boys' behaviour was otherwise good, their attitudes to working at a good pace were unsatisfactory.
202. The head of department provides effective leadership. For example, effective support is given to non-specialist and newly qualified teachers, increasing their confidence. Pupils are sometimes taught in non-specialist rooms. On these occasions, materials including artefacts are prepared for the lesson departmentally.
203. There have been some improvements since the previous inspection. There is now provision for all Key Stage 4 pupils to study and be entered for the short course GCSE in religious studies. The study of religions is more closely related to pupils' lives. The department is using base line data to inform planning and contribute towards target setting. However, there is no provision for religious education for all students in the sixth form. There are no planned opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in the department.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

204. GNVQs are offered in the sixth form, for which the school has been commended by the awarding body as an exemplar school. Attainment is average at Intermediate level in Leisure and Tourism and above average in Health and Social Care. Attainment is above average in Advanced GNVQs in Business Studies, Leisure and Tourism and in Health and Social Care. Attainment is average in the early stages of the new single and double awards in Year 12. The latter are already providing more opportunities for students to mix GNVQ units with AS levels, improving motivation and widening the range of courses suitable for students of middle to lower abilities. These students are enabled to either leave after one year with a good, recognised qualification, or to take the full advanced GNVQ or A levels.
205. In Business Studies Advanced GNVQ, students are making good progress and work is currently at the national average. More merits than passes should be achieved when the work is completed. Students reveal a very mature attitude and are able to carry out independent research, using good local links. Teaching is good, with well-planned use of resources, including well-integrated ICT. In Advanced Leisure and Tourism, attainment has been above average in recent years, with more merits and distinctions than passes. Current students enjoy their work, which is closely linked to many outside facilities such as hotels and leisure centres. Teaching is good, well organised, and able to interpret GNVQ requirements very well as a result of extensive training. Attainment is above average in Health and Social Care advanced. Students are very well motivated and are making good progress, most having a clear vocational focus in health and caring.
206. An important feature of all the GNVQs is the extent of outside visits, which are directly related to course work. In some cases, as in Leisure and Tourism, these visits are

mainly financed by the students' own fund-raising activities. Overall, attainment in GNVQs is above average at the completion of courses, retention rates are higher than those nationally, teachers are very experienced in GNVQ assessment methods and students are receiving a very good vocational preparation.

ECONOMICS

207. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been below average. The sixth-form performance is in line with national standards. In work seen, the majority of pupils on the GCSE course produce satisfactory course work with well-presented assignments, and make good use of information and communications technology. Progress in the sixth form is made in communication skills. Assignments are better presented and reach meaningful conclusions. Pupils and students at both key stages work well together. They learn factual knowledge of economic growth and development and they are encouraged to use their numerical skills to solve problems.
208. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are able to organise their work and they are gaining an increasing knowledge of economic measurements and the controls involved with economic behaviour. They take part in a variety of assignments and are required to evaluate their performance and make points for improvements. These skills are further enhanced in the sixth form. The teaching of economics is good. Strengths in teaching are the planning of lessons, the development of information and communication teaching skills and the balance of new challenges introduced at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Leadership of the subject is good. The documentation and schemes of work are good, giving consistency across both GCSE and A-level work. Good worksheets have been produced which enables topics to be taught more effectively. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The use of information and communication technology to support learning is much more extensive and effective.

BUSINESS STUDIES

209. By the end of Key Stage 4 standards are in line with the national average. The standard in lessons is satisfactory, reflecting attainment entry and in line with national expectations. The trend in attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 since the last inspection has been variable. In the sixth form standards have varied but overall they are average. At both stages pupils and students can use business vocabulary fluently and have a sound understanding of micro and macro-economics. By Year 11 most pupils have a clear understanding of what a profit and loss sheet represents. By Year 13 answers to questions on cash flow are neat, well presented and have been carefully researched. Students in the sixth form use information and communications technology to enhance their work. Examination results at both stages over the last few years have fluctuated above and below national averages for the top grades.

210. Pupils and students make progress in lessons. They improve their speaking and listening skills through group and class discussion. Overall, writing skills are just satisfactory. Written work often contains spelling and punctuation errors and this includes unfinished sentences that do not make sense. Attitudes to learning are good with most pupils and students enjoying their work and supporting each other.
211. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers make good use of their knowledge to plan their lessons. Work assignments are challenging and consolidate theory previously learned. Key skills of information and communication technology, number and writing are being improved. Teachers make effective use of local business links to encourage pupils and students to see the difficult world of trade and commerce. Since the last inspection there have been improvements to the provision of business education.

SOCIOLOGY

212. Attainment at GCSE and at A level has been broadly in line with national standards. In the work seen, all the pupils on the GCSE course are making satisfactory progress. Students studying for 'A' level are making good progress. The standard of teaching in the lessons seen was either satisfactory or good and the pupils and students responded well to the work set them.
213. The current Year 10 GCSE sociology class contains a very wide spread of ability and the teaching needs to be more differentiated in order to ensure that lower-attaining pupils are set some work that is more structured and tightly focused than that appropriate to higher-attaining pupils.
214. The students on the A-level course are well served by the imaginative and varied presentation of stimulus material. A further improvement to this good practice would be to link, more explicitly, new material to previous studied sociological perspectives.
215. As a one-teacher department the need for a detailed development plan has not been recognised and the subject is taught directly to schemes of work appropriate to the syllabuses being taught. The department needs to be drawn into the mainstream of the school's organisation, both in order to contribute to whole-school priorities and also to apply these same priorities in the teaching of the subject. A much fuller development plan is an essential part of this process as is the inclusion of the head of department in collaborative structures with other curriculum leaders.

PSYCHOLOGY

216. In 2000 the A-level psychology results were extremely poor, following results in previous years which were in line with the national averages. The teacher, with the support of senior managers, has carried out a detailed analysis of the reasons for the poor results and, as a result, has made sensible and appropriate adjustments to her scheme of work.
217. In the one Year 13 lesson seen, the teacher had prepared full and detailed resources to underpin her teaching and the learning of the students. Higher-attaining students responded well and made good progress. Lower-attaining students found the work hard and made much slower progress. This weakness in the differentiation of work is a significant cause of the under-performance, in the A-level examinations in 1999 and 2000, of low-attaining students who either failed altogether or generally fell short of

their predicted grades.

218. Students are interested, engaged and co-operate well with the teacher who is methodical, thorough and well prepared. Lesson planning is detailed and appropriate and the teacher works to a full and well-written development plan which targets clear areas for improvement, including those relating to whole-school priorities. However, the teacher is isolated and remote from the middle management structures enjoyed by the heads of larger departments and therefore does not have a platform from which to engage in professional debate with her colleagues and to be supported in her contribution to the development of good practice across the school.