

INSPECTION REPORT

SOLWAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Silloth, Cumbria

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112377

Headteacher: Mrs C Dunne

Reporting inspector: Richard Hancock
2715

Dates of inspection: 30th October – 1st November 2000

Inspection number: 223902

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Liddell Street
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Heslop

Date of previous inspection: 5th February 1996

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Anthony McDermott 21981	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Solway Community School is a small mixed comprehensive school for pupils in the 11-16 age range. It serves a small town and the outlying villages and hamlets in an isolated area of north west Cumbria, although some families send their children to the high school in the nearby town of Wigton, which has a sixth form. The roll has increased since the last inspection and there are now 228 pupils, with slightly more boys than girls. There are no pupils from an ethnic minority background and no pupils for whom English is an additional language. There are 43 pupils on the school's register of special educational need. This is 23 per cent of the school's population which is above the national average. There are eight pupils with a statement of special educational need which means that the school is in line with the national average. 20 per cent of the school's population is eligible for a free school meal which is close to the national average. The overall attainment of pupils on entry is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Solway Community School is a rapidly improving school. The headteacher is providing very good leadership and is well supported by senior managers, other staff and the governing body. The quality of teaching is good. The majority of pupils are reaching standards which are in line with national averages and are improving. Their progress is good. Pupils are well cared for, have good attitudes and the vast majority are well behaved. The school enjoys the confidence of parents and works well with the local community. There is a very good self-improvement plan to steer the school through its next stage of development. The school had begun to respond to the key issues raised by the last inspection and has more recently responded well and shows that it has the capability and will to continue to improve its overall performance.

What the school does well

- Teaching in the majority of lessons which is of good quality
- Helps pupils to show very good attitudes to learning
- Works effectively with parents
- Provides good levels of care for pupils
- Provides effective systems for self-improvement

What could be improved

- Provision for information and communications technology (ICT) so that it meets statutory requirements
- Pupils' attainment in ICT
- The breadth of the curriculum so that pupils are given more opportunities to reflect, to further their vocational interests and to appreciate a wider range of cultures
- The levels of challenge in teaching at Key Stage 3 in order to improve the attainment of pupils, particularly in history, English and religious education
- Aspects of SEN provision, particularly the individual education plans which are sometimes too generalised, pupils' access to the curriculum, and the monitoring of provision

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Unlike the situation described at the time of the last inspection, the school now has a common vision which is shared by all members. This is helping the school to move forward strongly. The headteacher has worked very effectively with staff, governors and parents to introduce rigorous management processes for ensuring consistency in policy and practice. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils are making good progress in the majority of subjects. Governors are supporting the school effectively. The school is meeting statutory requirements in relation to the daily act of collective worship. There has been some improvement to the provision for information and communications technology (ICT) but more progress has still to be made in this area.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	2000	
GCSE examinations	B	D	C	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Overall standards have fluctuated considerably over time, but have been on an upward trend since 1998. At the time of the last inspection in the school as a whole the majority of pupils were reaching standards in line with the national expectations for their ages with a substantial minority achieving standards that were below average. This is still very much the picture although the GCSE results in 2000 are the best ever achieved by the school in terms of the percentage of pupils who gained 5 A* -C grades.

Standards in English are below average in Years 7 - 9. In mathematics and science standards are better and results have been close to national averages over time.

In 2000, the GCSE results in English show a big improvement. Results in mathematics and science were in line with national averages. Results were in line with national averages in geography but were above average in design and technology.

The trend in the school's GCSE/GNVQ results in recent years has been below the national trend but in 2000, 58 per cent of pupils achieved 5 or more grades A* – C; a big improvement over the previous three years. The school has easily reached its GCSE targets for 2000.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most pupils enjoy school and become very involved in what they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show they can take on responsibility, co-operate well and have respect for one another and for adults.
Attendance	Satisfactory

Most pupils are very enthusiastic and are eager to learn. A few boys in Year 8 show poor attitudes and sometimes behave badly. Most pupils show good initiative and work very well together. They are keen to attend school and take an active part in what it offers them. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

At both key stages, the quality of teaching in English is uneven. It is good in some lessons but is satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in mathematics and is very good in science. Teaching is also of good quality throughout the school in art, ICT, geography, and PE. It is also good in history and music in Years 10 -11. The main strengths of teaching include the grasp of subject knowledge, the ability to motivate pupils, levels of planning and the clear aims and objectives for lessons. Weaknesses include lack of confidence in how to manage classes and a failure to address the specific needs of some pupils. Although in individual lessons there is some effective teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy, overall it is unsystematic and therefore not fully effective.

The quality of teaching is very good in 20 per cent of lessons, good in 42 per cent, satisfactory in 36 per cent and unsatisfactory in 3 per cent. The major strengths in the pupils' learning are to be found in the enthusiasm they show for learning and their willingness to get on with tasks. The major weakness lies in the unsystematic development of their basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, but in need of further broadening to include more time for pupils to reflect, to apply the skills of ICT, to be introduced to more vocational aspects and to appreciate a wider range of cultures.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, but some strengthening needed to ensure that individual educational plans are sufficiently detailed, that pupils have full access to the curriculum and that all aspects of provision are regularly monitored to ensure quality.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good provision for pupils to interact with one another and for them to know the difference between right and wrong. Limited opportunities for pupils to reflect on experiences other than in assemblies. Some good cultural opportunities, especially in relation to the arts, but limited references to the diversity of cultures in the day-to-day curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school cares well for its pupils through its pastoral programme, its PSE work and the form tutor role.

The school works well with parents, consults them on major issues and take good account of their views. There is breadth and range in the curriculum at both key stages. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Careers education is effective. There is insufficient stress on the world of work in the curriculum, especially in Years 10 -11. Scope for the pupils to reflect in assemblies is good but is limited in lessons. Schemes of work have only limited reference to other cultures. Statutory requirements are not being met in ICT.

The school cares very effectively for pupils through its programme of pastoral care.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership. Clear direction provided and good ethos for learning established. Some very good management practices e.g. school improvement planning, staff development programme and the monitoring of teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good, although two statutory responsibilities have still to be met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Data is being collected and systematically used by the school to identify areas for improvement. The governing body is beginning to work with the school on an evaluation of its overall performance.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are no major shortages in the school.

The school has a clear sense of direction and is being very well led by the headteacher. It is well staffed to teach the National Curriculum and other subjects. There is an effective staff development programme. Newly qualified teachers are given good support. The school benefits from good administrative and technical support staff and the site is safe and well looked after. The school is giving good value for money.

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 way the school cares for pupils • That pupils like the school • That pupils are expected to work hard and to give of their best • That the school is approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of some pupils • Extent and nature of homework

The school is very responsive and cares well for the pupils. The vast majority enjoy coming to school, work hard and give of their best. In order to improve behaviour, the school has been working on a behaviour policy. This is having a beneficial effect as most pupils behave well except for a minority of boys in Year 8. Homework is making a positive contribution to the progress of pupils but its extent and purpose need to be continually monitored.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection the majority of pupils were reaching standards in line with the national expectations for their ages with a substantial minority achieving standards that were below average. It is a similar picture now but there are clear signs that attainment has been improving rapidly recently. Results do fluctuate over time. In 2000 the school had its best GCSE results ever and the school easily exceeded its targets.
2. In 2000 the Key Stage 3 test results in English were below average and boys are doing less well than girls, but in mathematics, test results are in line with the national average, but are above average in science. Attainment is average in design and technology, French, art, music and geography. It is above average in PE. Attainment is below average in history, religious education and information and communications technology.
3. At Key Stage 4, English results have been below average in terms of pupils reaching grades A* - C, but improved significantly in 2000. Boys do less well than girls. In mathematics GCSE results have also been below average, but improved in 2000. In science, results are above the national average. The trend, in the school's GCSE/GNVQ results in recent years has been below the national trend but the most recent results will arrest this decline. Attainment is average in design and technology, French, PE, art, music and geography. It is above average in history. Attainment is below average in ICT and religious education.
4. For the most part, standards of literacy are average, but there are significant numbers of pupils who have weak literacy skills at both key stages, but particularly in Years 7 - 9. In religious education, pupils are prevented from making adequate progress, because of their weaknesses in literacy. The school has recognised this overall weakness and has devised a good literacy policy to deal with it which has still to be fully implemented. As yet there is no policy for the development of numeracy. Standards of numeracy are average.
5. In the school as a whole, pupils with special educational needs generally achieve levels commensurate with their capabilities. A majority of those identified on the school's register have below average levels of literacy and others have numeracy difficulties. Progress towards their targets is generally good, and the rate of progress improves where the work set by subject teachers has been modified to meet their individual needs, as in Year 8 science. As a result, these pupils make the same progress as the rest of the group. Similarly, when there is in-class support, progress is usually improved. This occurred when lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs made good progress under the guidance of a learning support assistant when working on volcanoes in a Year 9, geography lesson. Progress is less swift when individual education plans lack detail and do not set targets.
6. High-attaining pupils generally do well in the school. In most classes and in most subjects there are good levels of challenge and they respond well to this. The attainment of boys generally is not as good as that of girls but the disparity is not apparent in all subjects and in geography, for instance, boys and girls are attaining equally well.

7. The major weakness is the attainment of boys in English in Years 7 - 9 particularly in relation to writing skills.
8. When they enter the school the overall attainment of pupils is below average with their skills of literacy being significantly weaker than their numeracy skills. By the time pupils leave school overall attainment is at least average in most subjects and this represents good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They clearly enjoy school and eagerly and unreservedly participate in all aspects of school life. For example, Year 7 pupils enthuse about extra-curricular activities such as homework clubs, the work they do in science and design and technology and the use they have of information technology facilities. In the classroom, pupils' attitudes are very positive. They are keen to learn and co-operate readily with their teachers, and work very well with one another.
10. Pupils behave well, both inside and outside the school. It can be seen at many different times in the school day. For instance, they file into the main hall carrying their own chairs and sit quietly and alertly throughout the morning assembly. At lunchtimes pupils are both courteous and friendly. They are polite to adults and to each other. Lunch is eaten in a relaxed, pleasant and quiet manner. Older and younger pupils mix readily at break and lunch times. For example, some Year 8 and Year 10 pupils, both boys and girls, choose to share a dinner table. Exclusions are slightly above the national average. Some pockets of misbehaviour by a minority of boys was observed in Year 8, but this was very uncharacteristic of the school as a whole.
11. Pupils show initiative and they are willing to take on responsibility. Most older pupils are eager to become prefects. A small group of Year 11 pupils act as savings bankers for the other pupils and subsequently go on to train their own replacements. The pupil council members display a wide vision of the school's community links and manage meetings in a very mature manner. They organise events, raise large sums of money and provide valuable resources such as pay telephones and non-slip mats in the shower areas. Pupils display a good degree of maturity in the way they maintain personal school planners.
12. Pupils are considerate and show concern for others. Throughout the school relationships are very good. For example Year 7 pupils patiently wait until other pupils finish before they speak and are ready to volunteer opinions on issues such as the need for self, discipline or environmental protection. Most pupils are on friendly but respectful terms with teachers. Older pupils treat the views of the younger pupils as having worth. Following an assembly at which Muslim traditions and values were presented in an engaging manner, pupils displayed respect for these values.
13. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into lessons. They are generally enthusiastic and take a full part in debate and other activities. The ease with which they relate to other pupils was especially noticeable in physical education at both key stages. If pupils find it difficult to be positive, teachers sensitively draw them into lessons through the skilful use of questioning. This is particularly effective in geography at both key stages.
14. In the school at large there is no evidence of bullying or sexism. Attendance is satisfactory and is broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is below the average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. In the school as a whole, the overall quality of teaching is good or very good in two thirds of all lessons. It is especially good in Years 10 – 11, where teaching is good or very good in three quarters of all lessons. In one in five lessons it is very good. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in almost a third of all lessons and is unsatisfactory in three per cent. The lessons in which teaching was good or very good were well distributed across subjects. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
16. Teachers' knowledge of their subject and an enthusiasm for it, are the major strengths. English teachers want to share their appreciation of good literature with pupils, and teachers of art and science find effective ways of turning their knowledge into activities which help pupils to learn. Planning levels are good. This was often a characteristic of teaching in mathematics, religious education, ICT, design and technology and PSE. Planning was often underpinning a drive to raise attainment through the use of targets, also a noticeable characteristic of teaching in art, drama and PE.
17. Further strengths include effective work to develop the skills of pupils, seen especially in PE, art and drama. Good feedback is being given to pupils in a number of subjects, notably in PE, art and science where lessons are often well rounded off with an emphasis on what the pupils have learned in the lesson. These lessons also had clear aims which were made explicit to pupils. Instructions were clearly given and good ways of summarizing progress were observed, together with the effective use of questioning. Teachers did not allow pupils to dwell too long on activities but intervened effectively to confirm some point of learning or to share achievements. The teaching of French is especially effective at drawing out knowledge from pupils.
18. The general range of strategies used in many lessons encourages pupils with special educational needs to become fully involved in learning. Debate and group work, sometimes in groups which the pupils choose to work in and at other times in teacher, directed groups, is a generally effective way of encouraging the development of speaking and listening skills.
19. Pupils with special educational needs are often being taught well when learning support assistants work closely with the class teacher to address their specific needs which have been identified clearly in the individual education plans. Some work, however, lacks focus because the learning support assistants are not always fully used or adequately briefed, or the individual education plans are imprecise and lack detail. On these occasions the outcome is less successful. Learning is at its best for these pupils where the support assistants plan jointly with the teacher, and have specific strategies for moving pupils on. This is a new initiative within the school and is proving very successful in most cases. Some staff are now using materials and work sheets which are specially modified to meet needs, and this is also successful. In other cases, although lesson planning indicates that this strategy is to be used, it is not always being adopted, as in Year 10 French, for example. However, teachers do know their pupils well and always offer additional support when they observe a pupil having specific difficulties.
20. The more able pupils are being given good opportunities to learn through the use of challenging schemes of work and the school has a sound basis from which to move further in this area. There are few strategies specifically devoted to improving the attainment of boys and this is an area of need that the school has already identified as

a priority and will need to address.

21. Weaker features of teaching include uncertain classroom management, especially on the infrequent occasions when pupils misbehave, and the lack of a dedicated focus on addressing individual needs e.g. skills development in writing in some English lessons, particularly. In some lessons the pace of learning is slow and learning is only just adequate for the time allowed for it.
22. The unsatisfactory lessons occurred in Year 8. In two of these lessons, in French and English, teachers had difficulties managing the behaviour of some boys which interfered with the learning of other pupils. In one lesson, literacy work lacked challenge.
23. The school handbook has extensive documentation on what makes for quality in teaching and learning which shows that the school regards this area as central to school improvement. Evidence indicates that this is having a definite beneficial effect and is a good example of how professional development can lead to improvements in practice.

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

24. The appropriate statutory curriculum, including religious education, is in place in both key stages, apart from the provision for teaching ICT where the application to learning in subjects as a whole is insufficient and the control element of the subject is inadequately represented in the programmes of study. Apart from this, the breadth, balance and relevance of the curriculum is good in Years 7 – 9 and is broadly satisfactory in Years 10 - 11.
25. In Years 7 – 9 pupils follow a broad curriculum which includes PSE and drama. In Years 10 – 11 pupils follow a core curriculum and in addition have a choice of study from a range of other subjects. There is an ICT course in all years. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has improved since the last report. The school is now using the freedom to disapply pupils from parts of the curriculum which means that some pupils take extra arts and humanities courses and one pupil is following a work-related curriculum. Further development is proceeding in this area but the vocational route is not as yet well defined. One enriching characteristic is the broadening of the agricultural and horticultural science course. Pupils have the opportunity to work with the larger animals and learn the benefits of running a small enterprise in the form of selling produce.
26. The curriculum has been constructed with attention to challenge, comparison and consultation. There is a good level of challenge for pupils of all abilities at both key stages. A systematic approach to the development of the skills of literacy has still to take effect although there is a good literacy policy in place. Similarly, there is as yet no whole school numeracy policy although there is awareness of the opportunities to teach numeracy in some departments. Examples of good curriculum opportunities are seen in PSE where much of the teaching is good and leads to the development of team skills and in science where the use of the research method leads to some effective learning. There is no opportunity for pupils to learn a second foreign language. The school is rightly proud of the development in ICT of an Online GNVQ course in ICT which is being undertaken with a partner school in Shropshire and is a good example of how to provide relevance and qualifications for pupils in this subject.
27. The curriculum is regularly reviewed in the light of observed strengths and weaknesses. Parents are consulted and surveyed at least once a year on the content

of the curriculum; this recently led to the GCSE course in physical education being adopted. Results of parental surveys are published in regular newsletters sent home. Pupils are consulted in a variety of ways and curriculum review and planning feature prominently in both school and department planning. There is a very good well-planned programme of PSE for one period each week for which staff are specially trained, and this has a very positive effect on standards in class. The statutory response to drugs education, health education and sex education is made in the PSE programme.

28. The allocation of time to subjects of the curriculum has been adjusted since the last inspection with special consideration being given to English where the situation is now satisfactory. The teaching week consists of twenty-five hours, which matches recommendations. The allocation of fifty minutes to the large majority of lessons promotes efficient working in most classes.
29. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There is a major musical production every year. There is a homework club one night a week, with other time being made available if requested. Year 9 and Year 10, pupils have opportunities to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. A youth club operates one night per week, and a high proportion of pupils visit America on alternate years.
30. Able pupils are identified and an increasing number of opportunities for enrichment and extension and acceleration are being developed in some areas such as science and art. The spiritual aspects of the curriculum are under-developed but the moral and social aspects are strong. Pupils have good opportunities to study the culture associated with the arts but the opportunities for them to become aware of a wider range of cultures is limited. Nonetheless, awareness of living in a multicultural society has been enhanced by pupils working on masks with a member of the Notting Hill Carnival committee and an African poet has spent time working with pupils in lessons. Theatre trips are organised in the French department.
31. The curriculum committee of the governing body is active in monitoring both policy and practice, with governors attached to subject departments, and some classroom visits being undertaken in accordance with policy. Overall, with the exception of ICT, the curriculum satisfies the aims of the school and the governing body's curriculum statement is sound.
32. The recent introduction of new individual education plans, which target literacy for the most part, has enabled some pupils to have fuller access to the curriculum. Others require more help if they are to understand complex ideas such as the one encountered in geography where a pupil found it difficult to understand a graph indicating the amount of nitrates needed to treat land, and would have benefited from learning support materials to help him interpret its significance. Some pupils are inappropriately withdrawn from design and technology and ICT lessons for work focusing on literacy. Whilst in many lessons, pupils are being helped to study the whole curriculum through the help they receive from learning support assistants, provision is uneven and on some occasions learning support staff are not well directed. This area of the school's work is yet to be subject to rigorous monitoring.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school attaches great importance to pupils' welfare and provision for their health and safety is very good. Health and safety policies, both general and departmental, are fully implemented. Teachers know the pupils well and are vigilant to their pastoral needs. All teachers are trained in first aid. Child Protection procedures comply with statutory requirements.

34. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Form tutors are kept fully informed of the reasons for absences of pupils and contact parents as necessary. The school liaises closely with the educational welfare officer. Parents support the school's behaviour policy and code of conduct. The bullying policy is clear and procedures are in line with the school's aims and values. Achievement and effort are rewarded through a system of star marks and celebration at school assemblies. Pupils also record their individual achievements in their record of achievement. Annual awards are presented to the best pupils in each year. Both the rewards and the criteria for sanctions criteria are applied to all pupils.
35. Pupils' individual needs are met through a number of very good formal and informal overlapping processes. These include tutors' reports, pupils' school planners and meetings with parents. Close liaison with the primary schools and early assessment ensure that individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs are addressed. The overall progress of pupils is carefully monitored with the result that the school has a good awareness of both the academic progress and personal development of the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. Parents' views of the school are positive and they identified no major concerns. They perceive the school to be attaining good standards. They support the home-school agreement and the behaviour policy. Information about the school and pupils' progress is good. There is very good liaison with the feeder primary schools and the pastoral and educational information transferred is discussed with individual parents. Other information is provided in the form of fortnightly newsletters and regular detailed pupils' reports both written and verbal.
37. Individual parents are contacted immediately when concerns arise regarding attendance, behaviour, educational progress or welfare. Parents have access to pupils' school planners and records of achievement. They are welcomed at the school and meetings with teaching staff are easily arranged. Parents are invited to all reviews of pupils with special educational needs and most choose to become involved. If parents do not attend, the school ensures that they are kept informed of any proposed changes to provision.

38. The Fundraising Group is active. Parents organise social events and provide useful resources for the school. Other parents paint classrooms and help in other ways. However, many parents have little direct contact with the school. Recent initiatives such as questionnaires are generating increasing interest and two parents are shortly to assist with pupils' reading. Other parents have attended a behaviour management project. Church and other community links are good and these are valued by the school. Joint efforts are being made to raise European funding for a sports hall for both community and school use.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

39. The headteacher is providing very good leadership. The school has a very clear sense of direction and is already well on the way to achieving some of its main aims and priorities. The whole school has been involved in the process of consultation. Parents, teachers, governors and pupils can all see that their thinking is reflected in improved practices in the school. Consequently, all members of the school community feel that they are playing an important part in its programme of self-improvement. This situation is in strong contrast to the situation described at the time of the last inspection.
40. The aims and values of the school are made explicit in the prospectus and govern the way in which the school improvement plan is put together. Whilst the scope of the plan is very ambitious for a small school, there are clear signs that it is moving rapidly forward on all fronts. For instance, finance is being well used to support major priorities and the school has set out a good strategic plan to deal responsibly with the large deficit budget without allowing the magnitude of the task to affect the momentum of development. Any recommendations made by audit reports are acted on.
41. The headteacher has undertaken rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching which has led to an effective staff development programme. It has also given the school a strong platform on which to base its approach to performance management. The school is setting targets and reviewing progress. It shows good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, although these are not as yet fully known by the governing body, which has still to undertake an overall evaluation of the performance of the school.
42. With the exception of provision for ICT, the governing body is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, although the review of special educational needs provision in the chairman's annual report to parents lacks detail and there is no reference to the progress made by the governing body in addressing the key issues from the last inspection report. It is taking a close interest in the current progress been made by the school and sees the importance of training in order to keep up with the new requirements expected of governing bodies.
43. The management of special educational needs is progressing well. All the major elements of the code of practice are in place. The day-to-day practice of teachers and support staff varies between being very effective and unsatisfactory, although it is mostly good. Some individual education plans are very well prepared and show good levels of detail but others are very general in style and do not have the detail needed if teachers are to address pupils' weaknesses, effectively. Few have targets or levels incorporated. The detailed monitoring of this provision has still to take place. A newly appointed co-ordinator has made a very good start in ensuring that the school fully meets statutory requirements. A new policy, awaiting governing body ratification, has been produced, coupled with good quality material to help staff understand their individual roles in relation to special needs teaching and administration. To raise

awareness further, the school has held a number of training days recently, including the writing and use of individual education plans. These are all positive moves forward, and although the school has still some way to go, progress since the co-ordinator was appointed has been very good.

44. Accommodation is well used and makes a positive contribution to the learning ethos of the school. Effective displays convey the learning that pupils are undertaking and shows evidence of their achievements. The care shown for the premises adds to the ethos of the school and makes it conducive to learning. There are no major shortages of resources although the stock of the library relates more to the wider needs of the community than to the learning needs of the pupils, but it is, nonetheless, well used. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. The support staff are making a major contribution to the success of the school. They are efficient, helpful and responsible, and feel well valued. They are also part of the school's commitment to succeed and to move forward as one body.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governing body need to work to raise standards in the school by:

- ensuring that provision for ICT meets statutory requirements through introducing the control element to the programmes of study and ensuring that ICT applications are firmly embedded in the work of all departments;
- raising pupils' attainment in ICT throughout the school so that pupils use the full range of applications with greater confidence and higher levels of skill;
- broadening the curriculum further so that pupils:
 - a. have more opportunities to reflect on experience in their day-to-day lessons;
 - b. are exposed to schemes of work in all subjects which incorporate examples and illustrations from a wider range of cultures;
 - c. have opportunities to extend their knowledge of the world of work;
- raising levels of challenge in teaching in Years 7 - 9 with the intention of raising the attainment of pupils, particularly in history, English and religious education;
- improving special educational needs provision so that:
 - a. all individual education plans are detailed, precise and refer to targets;
 - b. all pupils have full access to all subjects of the National Curriculum;
 - c. monitoring takes place to help ensure that all practices are working effectively.

Other, less significant matters, for the school to attend to are:

- ensuring that the governing body starts to evaluate systematically the overall performance of the school systematically;
- ensuring that the literacy policy is fully implemented and provision reviewed;
- encouraging parents to play a larger part in pupils' learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	20	42	36	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	223	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	44	N/A

Special educational needs	Y9 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	43	N/A

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.00
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	21	15	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	7	13	13
	Girls	12	11	9
	Total	19	24	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (64)	69 (62)	61 (58)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (18)	49 (31)	11 (15)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	8	13	14
	Girls	12	11	10
	Total	20	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	59 (44)	69 (50)	69 (50)
	National	64 (61)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (13)	46 (0)	29 (0)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	20	21	41

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	7	20	20
	Girls	9	18	19
	Total	16	38	39
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (29.6)	93 (96.3)	95 (96.3)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.5 (89.8)	95.8(95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35 (32.6)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	223
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	28	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.65
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	22.4
Key Stage 4	22

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	649490
Total expenditure	638501
Expenditure per pupil	2826
Balance brought forward from previous year	135847
Balance carried forward to next year	124858

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	223
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	56	11	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	52	7	4	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	48	19	4	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	37	15	4	0
The teaching is good.	19	70	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	56	0	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	41	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	26	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	33	48	11	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	37	52	0	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	52	4	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	15	56	11	4	15

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

ENGLISH

Because of staff absence the evidence base for judging teaching was restricted

45. The overall attainment of pupils in English when they start the school is below average as can be seen from their Key Stage 2 results. They do make some progress in the school but, nonetheless, by the time the majority of students reach the age of fourteen their attainment is still below average. However, standards are higher at Key Stage 4 and by the time they reach the age of sixteen the current attainment of pupils is reaching average levels. At Key Stage 3 over a three year period the attainment of pupils has been below average levels and the most recent national curriculum test results show that this is still the case. Over time, results in the GCSE examination have been below average, but in 2000 results were much improved.
46. The majority of boys are doing far less well than girls and are doing less well than boys nationally. Some are particularly weak at writing and find it difficult to write at length, to organise their ideas, and to use punctuation to help them to convey meaning. Although this is especially noticeable in Years 7 - 9, it is still a weakness in Years 10 – 11. However, some pupils, both boys and girls, show that they can write very well and their own original poetry stands out as strength. Overall, standards of reading are better than writing and the majority of pupils show that they can understand what they are reading. In Years 10 –11 the majority of pupils retain what they read and respond well. They are able to use quotations effectively to support their opinions of books. However, the best feature of their attainment is to be found in speaking and listening. Pupils listen well to adults and to one another and show respect for the views of others. Their levels of vocabulary are mostly good and they express themselves easily and fluently. They are ready to join in a dialogue and to speak naturally and to the point.
47. In the school as a whole, standards of literacy are adequate to help pupils learn in all subjects, apart from religious education, although individual pupils often have very conspicuous weaknesses. There is a very good literacy policy, which is in the process of being implemented. It is especially strong on recognising the part that all subjects need to play in helping to improve pupils' literacy skills as a basis for all their learning. There are already some signs that this policy is taking effect, especially in relation to the teaching of key words in a number of different subjects. Particularly good examples of this were seen in art, lessons where the teacher's use of technical terms was helping the pupils acquire the concepts they need for critical study. Other areas of significance such as the range of approaches to help pupils read more effectively have still to be put into place. The school has recognised the importance of pupils' improved literacy skills as a basis for their future development but has not yet produced an integrated strategy for addressing this complex issue effectively.
48. The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory and is sometimes good. The two major strengths of the teaching are the knowledge the teachers have of the books they are studying and the positive view they have of the pupils. Lessons are properly organised and learning activities are broadly appropriate. However, the strategies employed by the teachers rely heavily on teaching the class in a didactic style which is not allowing them to address the wide range of individual needs. Pupils need intensive help to address their weaknesses and at present this limited approach does not allow this to happen. Consequently, the pupils do not always make the progress they should in improving their literacy skills. In one lesson in Year 8, the poor behaviour of some boys resulted in

only a limited amount of learning taking place, but this was uncharacteristic of lessons as a whole.

49. The pupils have a positive attitude to this subject. They enjoy their reading and the majority are able to write for different purposes and different readers. They are enterprising in the use of ICT, although more effective use could be made of this for pupils with learning difficulties. They are keen to answer questions put to them by teachers. They enjoy discussion and debate.
50. There is good breadth to the English curriculum. The balance of activities between reading, writing and speaking and listening is appropriate. The pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills of speaking and listening in drama activities. They also have good opportunities to take part in other activities which help them to develop a wider interest in the subject. These include entering poetry writing competitions, working with visiting writers and story tellers, and visiting theatre productions. Especially enterprising is the link with the PE department enabling pupils to report on sporting fixtures which are then printed in the local newspaper. Some pupils were also seen producing their own newspaper. Older pupils could be seen at lunchtime helpfully assisting younger pupils with the development of their literacy skills. The standards described at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and in some respects the department is more effective now than it was then but, the overall attainment of pupils needs to be consistently raised, especially in Years 7 - 9, with particular reference to the attainment of boys in writing.

MATHEMATICS

51. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils who reached level 5 and above was above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching level 6 or above was well above the national average. Standards based on average National Curriculum points are close to the national average, both for 1999 and the four years 1996 to 1999 taken together. The difference in performance between girls and boys is against the national trend with girls achieving higher standards. Standards are well above the average for similar schools. The trend over the last four years, in terms of the average National Curriculum points score is broadly in line with national trend.
52. The unverified National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 3 for 2000 show a small decrease in the proportion of pupils who reached level 5 and above on 1999, but are still in line with the national figures. Standards on entry, based on Key Stage 2 results and other nationally standardised results, although fluctuating, are always below national averages, although the trend seems to be rising. Pupils therefore make good progress over the key stage. The levels of achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are good at the end of Year 9.
53. Lower, attaining pupils make good progress when handling data in Year 7 - 9. In Year 7 they draw pictograms and bar charts which are neatly and correctly labelled. By the end of Year 9 they can calculate various measures of average and successfully compare frequency charts. Some pupils at this level of attainment find pencil and paper methods of calculation troublesome to remember. In Year 7, higher-attaining pupils investigate patterns and sequences, and by the end of Year 9 can construct the formulae to generate these sequences. These pupils are comfortable in the solution of equations, but are sometimes less than confident in calculations involving negative numbers.

54. In 1999, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in GCSE examination were below the national average, while the proportion of pupils gaining A* - G grades is just above. The proportion gaining A* and A grades is well below the national average. More girls than boys achieved A*-C grades, but fewer achieved A - G grades, in line with the national average. Standards at GCSE over the last few years are improving, but are usually below those in science although above those in English. Results for 2000 show a marked improvement in standards, which are now in line with the national average.
55. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining pupils use trigonometry to solve problems. They can use and apply formulae for the volumes and surface areas of solid shapes such as pyramids, cones and spheres. Middle-attaining pupils are able to split numbers up into their prime factors and work with percentages, but are less secure with some aspects of algebraic manipulation. Lower-attaining pupils use percentages to make comparisons and are able to use ratio informally, for example in adapting recipes, but are less confident in formal ratio work.
56. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Good relationships and confidence building are a feature of all lessons. The positive atmosphere encourages pupils to 'take chances' and they respond well. Expectations are high. Lessons are well structured and proceed at a good pace. This guarantees pupils' attention and prevents them 'coasting'. Particular care is taken over the introduction of new mathematical vocabulary and classroom walls have word lists prominently displayed, and spellings are usually corrected when pupils' work is marked. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject, know their pupils well, especially those with special educational needs, and plan lessons to provide suitable challenge for all attainment levels within a class, a distinct improvement since the last inspection .
57. Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and this has a positive impact on their learning. They work diligently and the majority take pride in their work. They are sufficiently mature to be able to state their views or explanations to the class with the clear knowledge that these will be respected by others.
58. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching and a better match between pupils attainment and the challenge of work presented to them. Because of the relatively recent nature of the changes, the impact on standards are only now beginning to show, as are improvements in learning. The purposeful and friendly ethos of the department encourages pupils to become good learners. There is good organisation and thorough administration of the department and a clear vision of priorities for improvement. Teachers are strongly committed to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The good quality of the management of the subject has a significant impact on the standards achieved. At present, the use of ICT is not well developed.

59. Overall, the standard of numeracy in the school is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is not yet a whole-school numeracy policy although there are firm intentions to introduce one into the development plan. A cross-subject numeracy audit has not yet been undertaken. Provision for developing numeracy within mathematics is good and standards are good. In science lessons pupils of all attainment levels successfully use various measuring instruments. They read graphs in order to put together predictions. Pupils can use calculators and are able to use pencil and paper methods of calculation when needed. Measuring skills are also used with effect in design and technology. There are instances of counting and of mental arithmetic in French. The interpretation of graphical displays is much used in history and geography and in geography lessons pupils read and interpret proportional bar charts in the course of analysing land use in inner cities. Timelines feature in history.

SCIENCE

60. Standards are rising in science, particularly in Years 10 – 11 and attainment is good overall. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests the number of pupils achieving level 5 was above the national average whilst the number of pupils achieving level 6 or above was below national average. The provisional results for 2000 show improvement in the number of pupils achieving level 5 and above and level 6 and above. Over the period 1996 to 1999 performance in science is close to the national average, with results in science being at higher levels than English or mathematics. In comparison to schools taking their pupils from similar backgrounds, science test results at level 5 and above are very high, but numbers of pupils achieving level 6 and above is very low. These results have to be seen against levels on entry to school which is below national expectations, and the resultant confidence levels amongst pupils who are reluctant to attempt higher level papers in spite of predictions from assessment measures and work carried out in years 7 to 9.
61. When measured using average points score, the performance of pupils is close to the national average for similar schools. The performance of boys and girls is very similar. The number of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the 1999 GCSE examinations was significantly above the national average and all pupils achieved a grade A*-G. The average points score was above the national average. In the GCSE results for 2000 there is improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C and school targets are exceeded by a large margin. Results are maintained above national averages, although a very small number of pupils do not achieve a grade. In the period 1996 to 2000 the percentage of pupils reaching A* - C grades are always above national averages and the school's performance in science is better than that in English and mathematics.
62. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is at nationally expected levels. A small number of pupils attain somewhat below national expectation because of their weak literacy skills or poor behaviour. There is more evidence of attainment at higher levels in Years 10 – 11 than in Years 7 – 9. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 7 - 9 know how to measure the fitness in the human body and show an understanding of fair testing in a wide range of circumstances. They understand the basic elements of team-working and the need for co-operation by the whole group to produce more reliable experimental results. They can safely carry out experiments on their personal and group fitness and can enter the results in well-constructed tables, drawing graphs to interpreting results fully. They have the ability and willingness to predict trends and possibilities. A group of lower-attaining pupils can describe the contents of the chest and describe the workings of their lungs when supplied with prompts. They understand the effect of exercise on

breathing rates and investigate this, although some fail to interpret results and draw narrower conclusions from their experimental results. They know what affects breathing rates and the influence of smoking.

63. In Years 10 – 11 overall levels of attainment are above national expectations with the attainment of some pupils being well above average. A group of higher-attaining pupils can name the members of the alkane and alkene series and can write out empirical formulae as well as being able to deduce structural formulae up to four carbon atoms. They can safely carry out potentially very dangerous experiments having first planned their work. Their recording is of a high standard. They are able to explain characteristics of compounds having a variety of functional groups and appreciate multiple bonds. Extended writing is developed from their very good systems of recording. Investigations are very well planned, graphs are frequently drawn to a line of best fit and pupils know how to improve their work. Wide ranging conclusions result from their investigations. Lower attaining pupils successfully carry out experimental work on the effects of enzymes on protein but are not able to make predictions on a wide basis. They observe well but most have to be prompted to draw and interpret conclusions. They know that enzymes affect food but have difficulty in understanding the lock and key model of enzyme action but accept an explanation using a well-prepared cut out. Much well-completed homework is seen.
64. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Standards of work are rising. Pupils make good progress in their learning in both key stages, with some pupils in both stages making very good progress. Pupils with special needs make progress in line with their individual learning plans and the provision of specially prepared work helps pupils progress at the same rate as the class. Very good class management ensures that all pupils make appropriate progress.
65. The overall response of pupils is very good. Pupils are very positive in their will to learn and co-operate very well. Pupils obviously enjoy the very good teaching in an academic atmosphere where the scientific research method is producing a real science experience. Very good, firm, fair class management with very good relationships is largely the reason for this.
66. Teaching is very good in the large majority of lessons. At the heart of very good teaching is the application of the scientific research method with very good practical experiences being provided and balanced with high quality recording and interpretation of results. Lessons invariably start with a good sharing of objectives so pupils understand what is required of them. Teachers show a very good knowledge of their subject which produces confidence and security amongst pupils as they learn and rise to some very high challenges. Teaching methods and techniques are very good, with a good use of body language and voice production producing a sense of theatre which serves to hold attention and increase learning. The practice of very good health and safety procedures allows pupils to use some of the stronger more active chemicals that enhances practical and certainly increases learning. A chemistry lesson serves to show the application of many senses, including smell, when that produced by the reaction is duplicated in the pear drops pupils receive as they depart from a very successful lesson they have enthusiastically enjoyed. Lesson time is very well used. Planning is good, and takes satisfactory account of the good assessment and target setting procedures but the production of weekly records is a weaker feature of the department's work.
67. Leadership and management are very good. The department has a clear sense of direction. Team working is excellent. Teaching is monitored and evaluated regularly and good feedback leads on to effective planning. Improvement since the last inspection

has been very good. A detailed analysis of the teaching of physical science has been undertaken and staff can now feel confident about teaching and learning in this area. There is a high standard of maintenance of resources by a very capable and hard working technician who is a good manager.

ART

68. Pupils' GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average in relation to both the proportion of A* - C grades and the pupils' average points score. However, results for 2000 show a significant improvement. Attainment in lessons at both key stages is in line with the national average.
69. The work in sketch books and in individual folios is of good quality. Many sketch books show that pupils have the ability to refine their skills when working towards the final piece of work in a project. Although the use of ICT in art is at an early stage of its development, standards are already good and some exciting work was seen using image manipulation in the style of Andy Warhol. Older pupils showed analytical skills when studying the works of Braque and the cubists before using this style in their own work. Pupils can use appropriate technical language in their analysis. Their printmaking work in Year 11 shows a commitment to development and personal improvement and the results are good.
70. Teaching and learning at both key stages are very good. Teaching strengths include clear planning, effective preparation and target setting where overall targets are modified within lessons to become personal targets for pupils. Clear criteria for success are also being established. Relationships are excellent and the management style encourages enthusiasm and commitment. The sequence of intensive skill development leading towards the making of exciting images is made clear to pupils. The questioning by the teacher concerning cubism was typically focused and helped the pupils to respond appropriately without either putting the answers into their mouths or limiting their responses.
71. The response of pupils at both Key Stages is very good. Attitudes are open and positive within a calm working atmosphere. Pupils are keen to succeed, and they co-operate and collaborate well. Above all they are open to new ideas and find the challenges set by teachers exciting. The art curriculum is broad and balanced, and a good programme of gallery visits and artists in residence available from Year 7 to Year 11 effectively extends the curriculum. The work undertaken by pupils with the professional ceramicist is of good quality, especially that produced by the more able pupils. The use of IT is a new initiative but is already proving a valuable part of the curriculum. The assessment scheme is very good, linked to target setting and the sharing of criteria for success, and includes a strong element of pupil self-assessment.
72. The multi-cultural elements of the art and creative textiles work is an important part of the curriculum. The department is very well led, with a clear view in the department of its needs and targets for growth. It is very well organised and managed. All the issues in art from the last inspection have been fully resolved. This is a much improved department.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

73. The 1999 GCSE results show that the overall attainment of pupils is above the national average for the proportion of pupils reaching grades A*-C. The results are also above the national average for A*-G grades. The 1999 results show pupils performing better in design and technology than in many of the other subjects that they study. Results for

2000 are also well above the national average for work in the areas of resistant materials and food studies. The 1999 results are an improvement on the 1998 results, and there has been a steady improvement in examination results over the past four years. The 1999 results show girls achieving better than boys overall, as is the case nationally. However, a few boys who come into the school with low attainment are leaving with a GCSE grade in design and technology. Stereotyped choices at the age of fourteen have been eliminated and girls study resistant materials and boys work in the area of food studies. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 in design and technology indicate attainment to be generally above national average.

74. The work seen in Years 7 – 9 shows standards that match national expectations. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the tools and materials they work with and carry out practical tasks competently and confidently. The majority have a satisfactory understanding of the design process and, encouraged by good teaching, can design and make a number of items, including a trowel combining metal and wood in Year 8 and a storage rack in Year 9. The construction skills in these projects are satisfactory. Pupils are able to construct flow diagrams to explain how they will fill and decorate cakes. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good attempts to produce ideas. For the majority of pupils writing skills are satisfactory, although a few pupils have difficulty in completing work in lessons.
75. In Years 10 – 11 standards are in line with national expectations. Pupils' practical skills are satisfactory and products are well constructed. Year 10 pupils are able to design and produce a "granny gripper" that involves consideration of properties of different materials, knowledge of levers and ergonomics. In Year 11, much individuality with some imagination is shown in the choices and designs and items such as kitchen tables, garden seats, and go-karts are produced. High-attaining pupils in particular are able to discuss their work well and show technical knowledge when doing so. Pupils of all abilities are able to produce design ideas of a satisfactory standard. In Year 10 food technology, pupils have a basic understanding of food hygiene. They know what micro-organisms are and can explain how cross-contamination occurs and the steps that can be taken to prevent it.
76. Overall design skills are satisfactory and some good work is to be seen at both key stages. While some good information and communications technology is to be seen in the food projects, a high percentage of this is carried out at home. Numerical skills are adequate for the pupils to operate satisfactorily in the subject areas. There are a few disaffected boys at both key stages that are under-attaining. While the majority of pupils' work in Years 10 – 11 is presented well in legible writing, some pupils in resistant materials could improve the look of their projects through better use of ICT and tidier writing.
77. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 – 9. Pupils make progress when learning to use a wide range of hand and machine tools safely and skilfully. They learn to weigh, measure and mark materials accurately as in the celebration cake in Year 8 and the storage rack in Year 9, recognising that this is important to the quality and appearance of finished products. Due to the good structuring of the courses throughout Key Stage 3 pupils make steady progress in using the design process to design and make. Pupils enjoy opportunities to work creatively and because the majority are well motivated rates of progress are increased. Throughout Key Stage 3 pupils use a wide range of techniques for working with a variety of materials that include wood, metal, acrylic, food and textiles. With good teaching they are beginning to learn the words that are specially related to the subject.
78. In Years 10 - 11, pupils build on the skills and knowledge they have gained in earlier years. The grounding they are currently receiving in Years 7 – 9 in researching

information, practising skills and presenting information is proving beneficial when they have to manage examination coursework projects. They learn to research projects in increasing depth and modify work. Higher-attaining pupils show a high level of independence.

79. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and is good in some lessons. This is a similar situation to that described in the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This is effectively used to communicate information and plan lessons that encourage pupils to work thoughtfully. Work of a challenging nature is presented to pupils such as in the lesson on micro-organisms with Year 10. The basic skill of literacy is taught satisfactorily with pupils listening carefully during lessons, answering questions well and evaluating their design work soundly. All of this makes an effective contribution to the progress the majority of pupils make in technology. This also helps pupils' with special educational needs to make steady progress.
80. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. They have a good awareness of pupils' special educational needs and provide for them, increasing pupils' self-esteem and confidence. In consequence, the quality of learning in lessons is usually good and pupils work productively. The relationship teachers have with pupils, and their class management, along with the structured curriculum, encourages co-operation, good behaviour and concentration. However, pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to use computer technology to enhance the presentation of their work. Homework is generally well used in the department. This was particularly noticeable in the lesson on Year 8 celebration cakes when pupils carried out research on proposed designs for homework. The detailed assessment scheme in operation gives clear criteria of how marks will be allocated. While social education is well embedded in the department's work, opportunities are missed for the cultural development of pupils. The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and collaborate well.
81. Leadership of the department is thoughtful and committed. There is a clear direction for the work in the subject. There is a good team spirit in the department with hard-working teachers committed to raising standards. Areas are safe in which to work, apart from the floor and step in one of the resistant materials workshop areas which is a potential safety hazard. There has been improvement in this respect since the previous inspection. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met although ICT still needs developing. The department is well aware of this and is making efforts to include more ICT in its work. The concerns expressed in the last report have been addressed with measures put into place to raise the standard of design skills. Teachers endeavour to encourage good presentation skills from pupils. More detailed schemes of work have been introduced since the last inspection

GEOGRAPHY

82. In the school as a whole, attainment in geography is close to national averages. Results in the GCSE examinations have improved considerably during the past four years, rising from well below the national average to being in line with them. Between 1997 and 1999 there was a significant improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* - C but the percentage fell again in 2000. Standards observed during the inspection show that at least half the pupils are achieving at appropriate levels. GCSE results have improved since the school was previously inspected. By the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that standards meet national expectations and are generally above the school's average. The standards are confirmed by inspection evidence.
83. Pupils in Year 11 have a competent understanding of evidence gathering, interpretation and of forming conclusions. They extract information from statistical data on urban

studies well, and translate this into maps using appropriate techniques. They apply their skills effectively when drawing conclusions when analysing information; for example, pupils are able to relate lower incomes in the inner city to the lower level of car ownership, or higher house prices in the outer fringes caused by higher incomes and increased demand there. Pupils show good knowledge and understanding of forestry and demography. Through a good level of independent research work, average- and higher-attaining pupils learn the skills and techniques of investigation, analysis and problem-solving all of which are essential elements of their GCSE course. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Through debate and investigation, they are able to consolidate their analytical skills effectively, and they express themselves in written form appropriately.

84. By the end of Year 9, pupils have an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of physical geography. They understand the movement of the earth as it cools to cause natural phenomena such as earthquakes and volcanoes. Higher attaining pupils especially have a clear understanding of the processes involved in the movement of tectonic plates and the different types of volcano. Average attaining pupils use technical language effectively in their writing, and explain terms such as erosion, weathering and crater appropriately. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs generally achieve in line with their capabilities although the quality and quantity of writing is below average.
85. Teaching is good overall, an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 7 enter the school with expected levels of geographical knowledge and understanding. The teacher capitalises well on this, and introduces them to a wide range of geographical concepts, focusing effectively on drawing comparisons between what the pupils already know of their own local area, with areas of the world which are less familiar to them. By developing analytical skills from early on, and by encouraging group debate and discussion, pupils become engaged quickly in learning, which they enjoy and tackle with enthusiasm.
86. In Years 7 - 9, particular attention is paid to the development of a good level of technical language. This is one of the major strengths of the subject. Key technical vocabulary is written clearly on the board at the start of lessons, and referred to periodically, so that pupils handle quite difficult terms such as seismology and epicentre with confidence and understanding. This is particularly productive in enabling lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to develop their understanding and to help give them the confidence they need in order to make progress. As a result, pupils tackle their work with enthusiasm, and concentrate well on tasks when solving problems, such as designing a plant that might survive in a desert landscape. The emphasis on language development is continued in Years 10 - 11, so that pupils are well equipped to tackle examination questions with appropriate understanding of vocabulary and its correct application.
87. A further strength of the teaching is the way in which the under-achievement of boys has been successfully addressed and the former imbalance in achievement between boys and girls no longer exists. Resources are well used in lessons. At both key stages, pupils are given a wide range of good quality stimulus material such as videos analysing the damage caused by earthquakes, differences in farming between the UK and Germany, aerial photographs of major world cities and relevant census data for analysis. This engages pupils' attention immediately and spurs them on to investigate, analyse and draw conclusions. Learning is enhanced and good progress is made. Pupils are well managed overall, although in Years 7 – 9 there is occasionally a tendency for noise levels to become excessive when pupils work in groups, sometimes at the detriment of learning. Behaviour, on the other hand, is good throughout and on

occasions it is very good, especially in Years 10 - 11.

88. Displays in the specialist room contain a good range of pupils' work with good quality extended writing on issues such as the effects of volcanoes on lifestyle and soil conservation. This affirmation of achievement is a further incentive for pupils to improve their knowledge and learning. The teacher uses work which is generally well suited to pupils' needs, but on occasions, some pupils with special educational needs struggle with the concepts. There has, however, been a considerable improvement in the quality of work set for different groups of pupils, and this area is now well resourced and is an improvement since the previous inspection.
89. The subject is well led and managed. Regular assessment takes place and this information is used as an instrument for improvement through improved planning and through target setting. The targets set for the current group of Year 11 pupils in their GCSE examinations are appropriate, and the department's targets for improvement are both realistic and achievable. These include raising achievement through improving resources and using information and communications technology, especially in the investigation of weather. The resources overall are sufficient to enable good teaching and learning to take place and for pupils to have appropriate access to maps, atlases and photographs.

HISTORY

90. In the school as a whole, attainment in history is below average at the end of Year 9. It is a much better scene at Key Stage 4 where performance in the GCSE is above average. Standards of attainment at GCSE have improved since the last inspection. Because only a few pupils study the subject, national comparisons are unhelpful, but all pupils achieved a grade at A*-G in the last three years, and 64 per cent gained grades A*-C in 2000, an improvement over the 55 per cent rate achieved in 1999. Pupils taking GCSE over the last three years achieved results which were in line with their overall levels in other areas of the curriculum. The work of pupils in Year 11, all of whom are boys, shows that the attainment of the current group is above national expectations. They show a strong ability to analyse and explain historical change and causes. Their knowledge of the course is very good.
91. In Years 7 - 9, however, attainment is below national expectations. Pupils are able to describe historical situations vividly and can suggest valid causes and results of past events. They can express such ideas clearly, in detail and at length. Whereas they can report and apply the messages from historical sources, they show little evidence of the ability to evaluate the validity of sources of evidence or of interpretations of history. When they do their own research, as they do in most of the units of work, there is a high level of indiscriminate gathering of information, including direct printouts from CD-ROM or the Internet. Pupils with special educational needs perform above the level expected, but the highest-attaining pupils, most of whom are girls, do not demonstrate the levels of analysis and judgement of which they are capable.
92. Teaching in Years 10 – 11 is good. Knowledge of the requirements of the course and of subject matter is very good. Lesson planning allows the pupils to reach high levels of analytical thinking in their discussion of issues and assignments for written work enables pupils to express their ideas in a variety of forms. Planning has improved since the last inspection. Classes are made aware of what is expected, and clear guidance is given. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well taught, especially where they are supported by a very effective learning support assistant. Apart from this group, however, the teacher needs to intervene more directly to ensure that all pupils

are following the instructions and are working to the best of their ability. At both key stages, work is thoroughly marked with close attention paid to the ways in which pupils might improve.

93. The curriculum has distinct strengths. Recent improvements mean that pupils are encouraged to write relevant arguments on a range of subjects, for example the causes of the civil war or the extent to which people could obtain justice in the middle ages. Such work helps pupils to consider important current issues and makes a strong contribution to their personal development. Some weaknesses that were noted at the last inspection still need to be addressed. Pupils need to be trained to research independently, making their findings relevant and using information to support arguments rather than simply noting it. They also need to learn to evaluate rather than simply take information from sources of historical evidence, and to examine critically the interpretations of history that they see around them.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

94. Standards of attainment are below average at both key stages. This is similar to the position found in the previous inspection. At Key Stage 4 all pupils in Year 10 are taught information and communications technology. A number choose to study the subject at greater length and study it as part of the GCSE Office Applications course. Standards of attainment in the 1999 Office Applications GCSE are well above national expectations with 75 per cent of pupils gaining grades A* - C. 100 per cent of pupils reached grades A* - G grades which is also above the national average. These results were a significant improvement on the 1998 and 1997 results which had also been above the national average. The results for 2000 have followed this rising trend. All pupils entered achieved a grade in the range of A* - G. In addition to the GCSE examination, the department enters pupils for the Pitman Word Processing Elementary qualification. In 1999 all pupils entered obtained a First Class pass. This was an improvement on the 1998 results. Results in 2000 show the majority of entrants passing the qualification, a high percentage with First Class pass results.
95. Despite the good GCSE results, standards in information and communications technology at Key Stage 4 overall are below what would be expected nationally. Whilst the GCSE course contains a large section of ICT work it does not cover all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Some pupils do not undertake any formal ICT lessons during Year 11. The inspection of pupils' work shows great variation in attainment and indicate that a large number of pupils do not demonstrate a high enough level of independent competence in the different aspects of the subject.
96. The teacher assessments at the end of in Year 9 in 1999 and in 2000 indicate standards to be in the areas of levels 4, 5, and 6 with a small number of pupils at level 7. While observation showed that many pupils are attaining satisfactorily in lessons a scrutiny of pupils' work indicated a great variability in attainment. Attainment in Years 7 – 9 is below what would be expected nationally. However, while attainment is below national expectations it has improved since the previous inspection.
97. Pupils arrive at the school with a wide range of attainment and experience in this subject. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils of differing attainment levels make satisfactory to good progress in Years 7 – 9 and are achieving a satisfactory level of basic skills in areas such as word-processing. Pupils acquire a satisfactory level of efficiency when using computers. In the taught information and communications technology course, the majority of pupils at Year 7 can access the software quickly and easily with teacher direction and work on producing a piece of historical work on *Romulus and Remus*. They confidently edit their work, enhancing it with different fonts.

While a few are slower initially at finding the software, the majority become competent at using it. Girls tend to produce the better presentations.

98. Pupils are fluent in basic operations, such as using a keyboard and mouse. Good teaching ensures that at Year 9 pupils are well-versed in identifying different presentation techniques, such as bullet points and the use of correct spacing. Some pupils show understanding of the technical language. In Year 9, work on an integrated holiday topic project is enhanced by clip art, the use of bar charts, and scanned photographs and Internet research. Some work on spreadsheets and basic databases on kings and queens of England is drafted and planned enabling the thinking behind the finished product to be observed. Higher-attaining pupils are able to progress more quickly through the work, pay attention to detail and use appropriate technical language. The rate of pupils' work is restricted by their limited skills with the keyboard.
99. In the specialist examination course, higher-attaining pupils plan in some detail how they will carry out a given coursework task. Work is well drafted and revised using a combination of computer and literacy skills. Coursework files show high-attaining pupils in particular-approach their work with thoroughness and show good ICT skills, producing agendas, newsletters and questionnaires that fit the purpose for which they are intended. These pupils are skilled in setting up spreadsheets for a variety of purposes, entering the formula and have basic understanding how this will be used. They produce a company letterhead designed to a specific specification.
100. Lower-attaining pupils are not paying enough attention to the quality of work and how to present it. Although measuring and modelling activities are seen in pupils' files they need more development in the ICT programme. Pupils with special educational needs do well and produce work that meets the targets set for them. Class management of a high order means that literacy skills, particularly those of speaking and listening, are developing well in many lessons. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were learning how to run a meeting and how to present the documentation to support it. Activities, such as the role-play based on the decisions made by a school disco committee, help pupils to develop their listening skills, their powers of evaluation and to grow in confidence

101. In addition to being taught how to use computers, pupils are required to develop the use of this capability within the subjects of the curriculum. In mathematics in Years 7 – 9, pupils use word-processing, spreadsheets and manipulate text and graphics to write up investigations. Sensors and measurement, desk-top-publishing, charts, graphs and word processing are seen at both key stages in science lessons. Some control work is developed in design and technology. The English department use pupils' ICT skills to produce a magazine. Some good use of photo scanning is to be seen in art work. In a geography lesson, Year 8 pupils were observed using ICT to design a plant that could survive the desert climate. Course work in some subjects is enhanced by good information and communications technology skills, but there are clear indications that much of this work is carried out at home. For a number of subject areas adequate access to computers is a problem. The cross-curricular use of information and communications technology is unsatisfactory overall because it is not fully embedded and well established in the curriculum. This means that statutory requirements are not being met.
102. The quality of teaching in information and communications technology lessons is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection report. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to give clear explanations to pupils. There are good detailed plans for lessons, challenging work and objectives that are shared with pupils. A good pace is maintained throughout lessons which are very well structured with a suitable balance of time for instruction and for pupils to work independently. Good interaction by the teacher in a Year 9 lesson helped pupils to revise the use of the different facility of the word processing software package to produce quality work. Class management is good and this ensures that although classes may contain some boys who are easily distracted, effective learning is taking place.
103. The needs of special educational needs pupils are well known to teachers and targets are set for them in the lessons. Useful teacher in-service training has taken place and more is planned for the near future. Ongoing assessment of pupils' achievements and progress is an area for development particularly in Years 7 – 9. There is little evidence of the monitoring of pupils' cross-curricular work. While some good pupil work is displayed throughout the school, this is not seen to any great extent in teaching rooms. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils co-operate very well, openly enjoy the good teaching they receive and are comfortable with the atmosphere in class.
104. The leadership of the specialist programme is good. The whole school cross-curricular management of the subject, however, is not satisfactory but since the last inspection much progress has been made and there are well-thought-out plans for further developments. A new teaching area with up-to-date hardware and software has been established. External qualifications are well established. A GNVQ Intermediate ICT course has been introduced with Thomas Telford School Online. The school is in a strong position to move forward quickly and attain good standards overall in a comparatively short time.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

105. In the school as a whole the attainment of pupils in French is in line with national averages. Given that pupils' attainment on entry is below average, this represents good achievement. At the end of Year 9, National Curriculum levels for the year 2000 were slightly above the national average at level four and above, but were considerably below the national average at level five and above. This was corroborated by the inspection of pupils' work. While there is some under achievement by higher-attaining pupils, especially in mixed ability groups, pupils with special educational needs are achieving well. Boys are also achieving well.
106. At the end of Year 11 GCSE results have fluctuated dramatically over the last four years, with a slow but steady rise in numbers taking the subject. This fluctuation is to be expected in a small school. In 1999 the results were considerably better than in 1998 and were in line with the national average. Although the proportion of pupils taking a GCSE in a foreign language was below average, a significant additional number of pupils achieved a distinction in the certificate of achievement.
107. The department has made a good decision to enter all pupils for GCSE as from July 2002 and to abolish the certificate of achievement because this is only designed for the lowest 10 per cent of pupils. The model in the current Year 10 of most pupils taking GCSE with a small number disapplied from languages is a good one and is a firm platform on which the department can build.
108. Teaching is good or very good in the majority of lessons. Where teaching is good it is characterised by a wide variety of different methodologies and activities. There are invariably good relations with pupils, good use is made of humour and there is a keen awareness of the needs of individual pupils. Lessons move along at a good pace and the sequence of learning activities are well linked. The learning environment is very positive. Displays show evidence of research work completed by pupils using the library and the Internet, useful phrases, and stimuli for learning, like National Curriculum level descriptors in language which pupils are likely to understand.
109. Lessons are organised in such a way as to enable pupils to work to good effect on an individual basis which allows for the teaching to concentrate on small group work, often with a focus on the more able. This is further enhanced in some lessons by the presence of a very good classroom assistant who supports learning effectively but unobtrusively. Lessons are very well planned and closely relate to what has gone before and what is to be developed later. The target language is well used and pupils can always follow the lesson, despite the infrequent use of English. Learning points of grammar are frequently integrated with the lesson and support the development of pupils' literacy skills. Work is assessed effectively. Pupils are aware of level descriptors and all the skills are frequently assessed using National Curriculum levels with helpful comments for future improvement.
110. There is a tendency to teach to the middle ability range, especially in mixed ability classes, with an over-emphasis on teacher-led activities. Occasionally, the chatter of pupils is allowed to go unchallenged and in one case this grew to a significant disruption and hampered learning.
111. Pupils' attitude to French is generally good. They are interested in the language, particularly pupils in Years 10 - 11, many of whom attend lunchtime clubs. Pupils play

an active part in lessons. They volunteer readily, settle to individual and pair work well and listen attentively to the teacher and to one another. They are often very self-critical, especially of their accents, and require high standards of themselves and each other. Exercise books are sometimes untidy, especially in Years 7 – 9, and there is occasional background chatter in some lessons which sometimes leads to pupils losing concentration.

112. The department is well managed and improvements have been made in the provision for speaking and listening and the use of more appropriate tasks for the less able pupils. Extra-curricular events have been arranged, including a theatre trip to see a French play, links with pen friends and visits from French pupils to the school. Trips to France have so far been unsuccessful, but the teacher continues to investigate this area actively. There is an interesting link with Silloth tourist office, where a brochure about the town in French has been devised by pupils, and is soon to be presented to the office. The school has built well on the good inspection the department received four years ago.

MUSIC

113. Pupils' GCSE results in 1999 were well below the national average for both grades A* - C and also in terms of pupils' average points score but results for 2000 show a significant improvement. Attainment in the lessons seen at both key stages was in line with national averages.
114. In some lessons it is apparent that the pupils do not have a strong background in terms of skills. The breadth of their musical listening is also narrow, which has consequences for candidates at GCSE level in the listening paper. Year 10 pupils were listening to early music for the first time. Some compositions and performances at all levels show little sense of pulse. However, the two-part vocal work with a mixed group of Year 11 pupils was good, showing good tuning and intonation with rhythmical accuracy.
115. Pupils with special needs attain well and have full access to the curriculum. A group of pupils in Year 7 with a majority having special needs also showed good understanding in theory and practice of the principles underlying graphic notation of sounds and pitches.
116. Teaching is very good in Years 7 - 9 and good in Years 10 - 11. Learning is good at both Key Stages. Teaching is characterised by very good organisation and class management based on excellent relationships; both teaching technique and musicianship are secure. As lessons are established, calm and order prevail, and then a sense of pace and urgency develops. Planning and preparation are good, although targets are not always fully shared with pupils. The teacher's skill as a singer is obvious and acts as an inspiration to pupils. The teacher is aware of the inadequacies in the assessment system and is already taking action to remedy them. There is good awareness of the pupils' musical background, and this is taken full account of in teaching whilst maintaining high expectations.

117. The response of pupils is good in Years 7 – 9 and very good in Years 10 - 11. They are open and positive and often show great enthusiasm for music. Some Year 8 pupils are still at an early stage of development with keyboard work. There is usually a good response to initiatives and challenges introduced by the teacher. There is a good working ethos. Pupils collaborate well but also accept individual responsibility for their work. When pupils do well they are made fully aware of it and levels of self-esteem are good.
118. The issues raised at the last inspection concerning curriculum balance and accommodation have been fully resolved. The department still does not enjoy the increased scope provided by the full application of information and communications technology, partly because of the inappropriate software. Extra-curricular music is healthy in spite of the lack of instrumentalists. It now involves guitarists and a choir of some 30 pupils. Instrumental teaching was very strong at the time of the last inspection but it does not exist now and this seriously affects pupils' access to the higher grades at GCSE and the maximum development of the more able young musicians.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

119. In the school generally the attainment of pupils is in line with national standards. Pupils are extremely enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative at all ages in their approach to physical education and the subject is very popular.
120. By the end of year 9 attainment is above average. High levels of individual skill and ability at netball are shown by girls in Year 8 and gymnastics in Year 9. The boys also demonstrate good levels of skill when playing soccer in Year 7. By the end of Year 11, overall attainment is generally satisfactory. However, the skills of individual pupils are again above average in netball and soccer.
121. The progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good in Years 7 – 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 - 11. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in both outdoor and indoor activities and always respond positively. They have a sound knowledge of muscle groups and understand the need for warm-up exercise which is, on occasion, directed very successfully by the pupils themselves. Pupils of all ages and abilities work hard and persevere with tasks. They work well together as a class, in groups and in pairs and are very willing to evaluate their own and others' performance, readily accepting praise and criticism from their peers in striving to improve technique and skill levels. There is clear evidence that in all lessons pupils are increasing their knowledge and developing their understanding.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and is very good in some lessons. It is very good in Years 7 - 9. Teachers are well qualified, experienced, have broad subject knowledge and use time and resources effectively. Lessons are well planned and move along at a good pace. Teachers also show enterprise, for instance in the highly successful, cross-curricular, team teaching which takes place in the Year 10 GCSE option group. Teachers have high expectations of and a positive and caring relationship with all pupils. Safety instructions and regulations are given a high priority.

123. The subject is well managed by an experienced head of department. Teachers work well together in a shared appreciation of both the department's and the school's aims. Finance is adequate and well controlled. Outdoor facilities are good, indoor facilities are adequate and both are well maintained. Equipment is of good quality and ample for all activities. There is evidence of strategic thinking. Planning is in hand to put forward a lottery bid which, if successful, will provide a sports hall on the school campus for school and community use. A broad and balanced curriculum is available to all pupils and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and school team fixtures for pupils of all ages. School teams are very successful for a small school which is equally well represented by individual pupils at district and county level.
124. Particularly impressive is the opportunity for some 25 pupils to spend two weeks at the end of the summer term on an adventure camp in the United States. Provision is also made for pupils in Year 8 to spend a week on "outward bound" activities in Eskdale. There is still a need to increase the number of classes where boys and girls work together with equal opportunity to access the full range of the curriculum. There is a lack of appropriate texts in the library for physical education studies and ICT facilities are, as yet, under-used. Since the last inspection, physical education has been introduced as an option for GCSE examinations and the take-up by ten boys and six girls in Year 10 is encouraging. Orienteering is to be introduced in the summer term of the current academic year which will enhance the PE curriculum even further.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

125. Attainment in religious education is below national averages. At the end of Year 9, attainment is well below national averages because pupils find it difficult to relate present learning to previous experience and to express it clearly either through writing or speaking. In Years 7 and 8, however, there is strong evidence that the situation is improving because many pupils demonstrate good discursive skills and can recall past learning and make use of relevant contemporary information. By the end of Year 11 the evidence of written work is that attainment is below the national average because of weak literacy skills. The evidence from both key stages is that most pupils generally make sound progress in relation to their prior attainment because the fluency of their work improves.
126. The quality of teaching is good. Its main strengths lie in the careful lesson planning, the variety of learning tasks deployed, and the encouraging atmosphere which is created. There is also a clear strength in the way in which multi-cultural and moral issues are addressed and promoted in a very sensitive but challenging manner. The weaknesses are the lack of subject and methodological expertise. This means that teachers work predominantly in the attainment area of 'learning about religion' and do not address the issues of 'learning from religion'. They also underplay the importance of literacy by promoting the subject predominantly in an oral medium, especially in Years 10 - 11. These two areas of relative weakness impinge on the attainment of pupils because their under emphasis means that there is insufficient challenge for both the very able and enthusiastic learners. This is clearly an area for development because pupils' responses to religious education are good and their behaviour is very good. They show that they are very sensitive and alert to moral and cultural themes.

127. The school now complies with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus at both key stages but the allocation of time to religious education is below the nationally recommended level and this has had an impact on the potential of the department to achieve sound levels of attainment and progress. Curriculum planning is weak and the schemes of work do not contain sufficient evidence that there is a systematic approach to the promotion of skills, concepts and key vocabulary over the key stages. Addressing this will enable greater attainment and progress to be achieved. Insufficient subject-specific target-setting indicates a weakness in the assessment strategy and this is an area for further exploration. The department is strongly committed to pupils' success, as illustrated by the quality and determination of its teaching and this agenda for action is well within their capacity to accomplish.
128. Since the last inspection, the breadth of the curriculum has expanded fully to encompass multi-faith approaches and an increased range of classroom activities has been employed, including more whole-class discussion and targeted questioning. High standards have been maintained in terms of individual lesson planning and the respectful responses of pupils. The absence of a conceptual framework is the most important single area which remains to be addressed from the previous inspection report and this, along with a more active promotion of literacy skills, represents an important key to significant improvement.