

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Tunstall

Stoke on Trent

Unique reference number: 124460

Headteacher: Mr C. Bannon

Reporting inspector: Mr C. Sander
4151

Dates of inspection: 4th – 6th December 2000

Inspection number: 223908

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D. Henshall
Date of previous inspection:	5 th February 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Margaret Ward Catholic High School is an 11-18 voluntary aided comprehensive school within the Birmingham archdiocese. It is about average in size with 934 pupils on roll, of whom 87 are in the sixth form. Its pupils come from a wide area beyond its immediate locality. It has increased in size by approximately seven per cent since the previous inspection and is oversubscribed. Nearly all the pupils are of white UK heritage. Approximately 30 pupils speak English as a second language, slightly higher than in most schools, but all do so fluently and require no additional support. One hundred and eleven pupils are eligible for free school meals, a proportion broadly in line with the national average. There are 76 pupils with special educational needs of whom nine have statements. Both figures are below the national average. The school is part of a locally managed national initiative called 'Excellence in Cities' that is designed to raise achievement and promote inclusion. Attainment on entry has been slightly below average but this year was broadly average. Approximately three-quarters of the pupils continue their education beyond the age of 16, about half of whom enter the school's sixth form. Three-quarters of these students currently enter higher education at the age of 18.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. Standards are well above the national average at the age of 14 and for the second successive year are in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. They are above average for similar schools at the age of 16 and above average for all schools in the sixth form. Standards are excellent in music and art and very good in science. Pupils' personal development and the quality of relationships across the school are excellent. Very good teaching enables nearly all pupils to achieve very well and make very good progress. The school is very well led and managed, its aims and values are understood and shared by all who work within it. It produces these very good results with a below average level of income and, therefore, gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards at the age of 14 and in the sixth form are very good because teaching is very well planned and regularly monitored.
- It achieves very high standards in art and music because teachers have very high expectations to which pupils respond very well.
- The teaching methods in science produce high standards at the age of 14 by encouraging pupils to think scientifically.
- A shared commitment to raise standards further by monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is a strong feature of the headteacher's very good leadership and management.
- There are very well managed arrangements for assessment and target setting to support pupils' very good progress.
- It has established strong links with business and industry that support pupils' learning well.

What could be improved

- Long-term planning for school development is not fully documented.
- The planned teaching of information and communication technology in some subjects is unsatisfactory.
- The indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in February 1996. Since then it has made good progress in raising standards and further improving the quality of teaching, particularly for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14. The proportion of very good teaching has increased. The GCSE and GCE A-level results are rising more quickly than they are nationally. Effective action has been taken to improve standards and teaching in mathematics. Exclusions are fewer now but attendance is not quite so high. Pupils are now performing more consistently in most of their subjects at GCSE. The governors' well-written action plan has addressed successfully most of the issues identified at the previous inspection. There are now good procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The work given to most pupils is now more challenging and better matched to their abilities but more attention still needs to be given to the needs of the gifted and talented pupils. Assessment procedures are greatly improved and well linked to target setting. The general management of the school is also

much improved: communications are better, the accountability of heads of subject for standards is now much clearer and job descriptions have been re-negotiated. Most documentation now meets statutory requirements but some required minor details are missing from the governors' annual report to parents. The sixth form still costs more to run than the budget allocates but standards are rising. Despite its small size it is becoming more cost-effective. There have been major improvements in accommodation although the indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education remain unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	B	C	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	C	B	

Key

well above average A

above average average B

 C

below average D

well below average E

Standards in the 2000 national tests at the age of 14 were well above the national average and very high for the second successive year in comparison with similar schools. They were above average in science and mathematics and average in English. Results in mathematics at the age of 14 have improved greatly over the last three years. Four out of five pupils reached national expectations, level 5, or higher in mathematics and science, a proportion well above the national average. Nearly two-thirds reached this standard in English, broadly in line with the national average. The proportion reaching standards above the national expectation was above the national average. More than two-fifths did so in mathematics and over a third in science. Approximately one-quarter reached this standard in English, broadly in line with the national average. Girls did much better than boys in English. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. Standards in work seen were very good. They were good in English and very good in mathematics and science. Standards were good or better in four out of every five lessons seen and very good in nearly half of them.

Standards in the Year 2000 GCSE examinations were broadly in line with the national average and above it for similar schools. They were slightly below the challenging target set by the governors. The girls did much better than the boys but the gap is no greater than it is nationally. Nearly all pupils entered for the GCSE examinations, approximately half gaining five or more grades A*-C, a proportion well above the average for similar schools and broadly in line with the national average for all schools. Results in English and science were broadly in line with the average for all schools nationally but well above average for similar schools. In mathematics they were broadly in line with similar schools but below average for all schools nationally. When the results are compared with how well the pupils did by the age of 14, the standards they reach two years later indicate that they achieve well, make good progress overall and very good progress in English and science. Standards in work seen were very good between the ages of 14 and 16. They were very high in Year 11 and particularly impressive in art and music. Standards were good or better in nine out of every ten lessons seen, in half of which they were very good.

Standards in the sixth form are good. In the Year 2000 GCE A-level examinations results were above the national average. The pass rate was 89 per cent. The average points score, 19.0 was above the national average. The students achieve well and nearly three-quarters of them enter higher education. Only a small sample of sixth-form lessons was seen and standards were broadly in line with national expectations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school. Many take part in the sporting, musical and community activities. They get on well with each other but the younger pupils have too few opportunities to exercise responsibility. The sixth-form students set a very good example.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Nearly all pupils behave very well. They move around the building in an orderly fashion and show a high degree of self-discipline at lunch-time and break-times. The number of exclusions is low and well below the local average.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils treat each other and their teachers with great respect. They work very well together in lessons. The high quality of relationships between pupils and adults is a major strength of the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It is broadly in line with the national average and well above the local average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is very good between the ages of 11 and 16 and in the sixth form. This confirms the views expressed by parents. It was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons seen and very good or better in 46 per cent. It was unsatisfactory in one lesson. The best teaching and learning was seen in Year 11. It was good in English between the ages of 11 and 16 and very good in the sixth form; very good in mathematics up to the age of 14 and satisfactory between the ages of 14 and 16. No teaching of mathematics was seen in the sixth form. The quality of teaching and learning in science was very good between the ages of 11 and 16. Pupils of all abilities learn very well because they respond very positively to their teachers' high expectations. Lessons are invariably very well planned. As a result they capture pupils' interest very successfully, foster concentration and, in the best lessons, encourage pupils to think for themselves, both analytically and creatively. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. As a result many pupils show confidence in writing at length; they read with good understanding and express themselves clearly. They apply their knowledge and understanding of number well. The school meets very well the needs of all its pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range is generally good. It is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils study either French or German between the ages of 11 and 14 and can take either a full or short course at GCSE. Vocational courses have recently been re-introduced for lower-attaining pupils over the age of 14. Industry days, retreats, visits, music week, trips abroad, industry links and work experience provide a good range of additional opportunities. There is a satisfactory range of subjects offered in the sixth form. The quality of provision is consistently good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The quality of individual education plans is generally good with clear targets set. Current procedures for the identification of needs need to be extended.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Generally very good with excellent provision for pupils' moral development. Their spiritual and social development is very well supported both within and outside lessons, particularly through musical and artistic activities. These also promote well pupils' cultural development although there is still insufficient attention to the values, achievements and traditions of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' attainment and progress are excellent. As part of the home school agreement teachers place a high priority on providing a safe and caring environment for all pupils. Their duty of care is closely linked to their concern for pupils' personal development. The school has established good links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership, ensuring that the aims and values of the school are expressed in all aspects of its work. The senior management team contributes very well to the successful development of the school; their teamwork is highly effective. The school development plan defines priorities clearly for the current year, concentrating on raising achievement and the further improvement of teaching and learning. Longer-term plans are insufficiently documented. The school applies conscientiously the principles of best value. There is a current budget surplus well in excess of the recommended level but this is earmarked for future major developments.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. All statutory requirements are met. Governors have a good understanding of where the school needs to improve, for example in setting challenging targets for improved standards in the sixth form. Through a range of committees, governors play a very active part in the development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There are very good systems for the analysis of pupils' academic performance and progress. The definitions of success criteria in the annual management plan are satisfactory, monitoring arrangements are good, but there is insufficient attention given to judging the value of major expenditure decisions.

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 school expects all its pupils to do their best and work hard. • Pupils make very good progress • The quality of teaching is very good • The school is very well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrangements for parents' evenings • Information about their child's progress

The inspection team agrees with those parents who returned the questionnaire or attended the meeting before the inspection that the foundations of the success of St Margaret Ward Catholic High School lie in the clearly expressed expectation that all pupils must always try to do their best. It is the defining characteristic of the school. It also agrees that the current arrangements for parents' evenings need to be reviewed. The school does try to help parents to see as many staff as possible but accepts that it does not always succeed. The inspection team was satisfied that sufficient information about the school and pupils' progress are provided to parents. There are now two parents' evenings for Year 7 pupils, and good use is made of assessment information to inform parents accurately about their child's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards at the age of 14 and in the sixth form are very good because teaching is very well planned and regularly monitored.

1. Standards in national tests at the age of 14 are well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools they are very high. For the second successive year, results in the Year 2000 were in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. In the sixth form there has been a major improvement in standards at GCE A-level. The Year 2000 average points score, 19.0, was above the national average; at the time of the previous inspection in 1996 it had been below the national average. The governing body works very well in partnership with the headteacher and the teaching staff to raise standards.
2. Standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection because there have been further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The very well-managed monitoring of teaching, learning and progress has made a strong contribution to these improvements. In lessons seen during the inspection standards were satisfactory or better in eight out of every ten lessons for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14; they were very good in nearly half of them. Standards were also very good in half of the lessons seen for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 and very high in Year 11, indicating a good degree of continuing improvement in standards at the age of 16.
3. In the Year 2000 national tests at the age of 14, results in science and mathematics were above the national average and very high in comparison with similar schools. They were broadly in line with the national average in English for all as well as similar schools. Results in all three subjects have improved since the previous inspection but those in English dipped slightly this year after a period of steady improvement, culminating in well above average results in 1999.
4. Both boys and girls made very good progress in science between the ages of 11 and 14. When they entered the school at the age of 11 they had achieved standards in the national tests at the end of their primary school years that were broadly in line with the national average, approximately two-thirds achieving the national expectation, level 4. By the age of 14, four-fifths achieved national expectations, level 5, an increase of almost 15 per cent. Whereas only a small number of pupils had achieved standards overall that were above national expectations on entry to the school at the age of 11, more than a third did so in science and two-fifths in mathematics by the age of 14. Except in Year 2000, where progress between the ages of 11 and 14 was satisfactory, pupils of all abilities also make very good progress in English. The very high expectations, regular homework and very good level of challenge in the work set are all helping to improve the performance of the higher-attaining pupils. Middle- and lower-attaining pupils achieve very well because in their very well-planned lessons care is taken to establish a good level of understanding through clear explanations and skilful questioning.
5. The biggest improvement has been in mathematics. Just three years ago standards were below the national average. They are now above average and very high when compared with similar schools. Decisive action has been taken to improve the leadership and management of the subject and also the quality of teaching by regular monitoring. The deputy headteachers have fulfilled their line management responsibilities very effectively.
6. Very good teaching in mathematics was observed on several occasions. For example, in a Year 8 lesson middle-attaining pupils learnt about simple linear sequences of numbers, tested predictions and found n th terms. Most of the pupils had achieved level 4 by the age of 11. Most were now working at level 5 and some at level 6 because they were set challenging tasks that encouraged them to think mathematically. At the start of the lesson there was good use made of

some of the methods to develop mental mathematics that have been developed in the national numeracy strategy. Each stage of the lesson presented new and more challenging tasks as pupils were guided by the teacher to see sequences and patterns in numbers. Success in this task then gave them confidence to look for more complex patterns. The teacher's very clear explanations achieved a very good level of understanding before he then challenged the pupils to extend their mathematical thinking, providing support to individuals to help them make progress. They were reminded about the correct technical terms and encouraged to use them in order to express themselves precisely. This contributed much to the clarity and accuracy of their thinking and expression as they worked in pairs to extend and apply further their understanding.

7. Very good planning was also a prominent feature of other mathematics lessons for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14. For example, in a lesson on number functions lower-attaining pupils in Year 8 reached standards in line with national expectations and achieved very well because the teacher was able to explain abstract ideas in language that they understood. Each section of the lesson was developed carefully so that no one was left behind, with questions used skilfully to check and extend pupils' understanding. The very careful planning and layout of the worksheet supported the progress of all pupils very well because the tasks were arranged in a series of small steps of increasing difficulty.
8. Pupils of all abilities enjoy mathematics because they are frequently taught with infectious enthusiasm. This is an important reason why lower-attaining pupils make such good progress. Their teachers understand their pupils' difficulties and by anticipating pitfalls skilfully guide them to success. This was a strong feature of a very successful Year 9 lesson when pupils showed a good understanding of simple linear equations because each step towards the appreciation of a general rule was identified in the very good lesson plan. There were good opportunities in the final part of the lesson for the pupils to share their understanding with each other.
9. Although results were not as good in English in 2000, standards in the current Year 9 are good and there are many strong features in the way they are taught. Standards are good because pupils are taught to read literary texts critically and with care. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on Macbeth they were encouraged to think and respond imaginatively when analysing and interpreting the image of the 'spent swimmers' in the captain's speech. They are given regular opportunities to develop further their good oral skills through discussion as a class and when working in pairs and small groups. Their written work is generally accurate and well organised. The good use of drafting to improve the content as well as the accuracy of their work is an important reason why standards are good by the age of 14. One reason why standards are not higher still is that the marking of the work of higher-attaining pupils does not identify sufficiently how they might improve further. This is a good feature of the marking of middle-attaining pupils and is helping them to improve their standard.
10. The Year 2000 statutory teachers' assessments and the work seen in the other subjects that pupils study between the ages of 11 and 14 confirm that standards are well above the national average. In the Year 2000 statutory teachers' assessments standards were very high in information technology and well above average in history. They were broadly average in modern foreign languages and in geography but well below average in design and technology where the standards of the boys were very low indeed. In nearly all subjects the girls do better than the boys but the gap between them is no greater than it is nationally. Indeed, one of the striking features of many lessons was the positive attitude of both the boys and the girls and their readiness to work well together.

11. The reason why standards are so good at the age of 14 in history was well illustrated in a lesson about the development of the trench system in the First World War. Planning was excellent. Stimulating teaching flowed from the initial, clear statement of what the pupils were going to learn. It combined a thorough attention to detail as the teacher checked that everyone understood such required vocabulary as 'duckboard' and 'dug out' with challenging opportunities to explore what life must have been like in the trenches. As a result, a good level of knowledge was gained, understanding was well developed and imaginations were fired. Standards were similarly high in information technology because a well-planned demonstration was followed by the very good use of questions and very well-planned 'instructions sheets' that helped pupils to design a form for the purchase of second-hand vehicles. Not only were explanations clear and questions pertinent but the teacher skilfully helped pupils to overcome difficulties by posing further questions rather than just telling them the solution. This was a feature of the very good teaching in several other subjects that encouraged pupils to persevere, overcome obstacles and complete the task. This was a strong feature contributing to the good standards in history.
12. Standards were higher in modern foreign languages and in design and technology than the Year 2000 statutory teachers' assessments indicate but broadly similar to them in geography. They are now good in modern foreign languages and design and technology because the quality of teaching and learning is getting better in both subjects and subject leadership is strong. They remain satisfactory in geography because teaching is thorough rather than stimulating.
13. The planning of lessons in these subjects for pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 is generally clear. They know and understand what they are going to learn because this is explained carefully at the outset. Schemes of work are now good. These improvements were well illustrated in a very good Year 9 textiles lesson in which pupils developed design proposals for fabrics in an hotel room. They successfully developed the range, style and complexity of their designs because the teacher timed her interventions extremely well in order to help them overcome uncertainties and difficulties. Those with special educational needs were particularly well supported in this respect. Standards were not so high when Year 8 pupils continued the completion of a basic circuit board because, although the lesson was carefully prepared with different worksheets for pupils of different abilities and explanations were very clear, there was less emphasis on using questions to probe and promote understanding and there was less emphasis on encouraging pupils to contribute their own ideas. In a Year 7 geography lesson pupils considered the changes that have occurred locally with the decline of the pottery industry and the development of new businesses. The lesson was thorough and well prepared but lacked the pace and spark that characterised the very good teaching in so many of the lessons seen between the ages of 11 and 14. As a result standards were satisfactory rather than very good because pupils were not always challenged to work briskly. They occasionally lost concentration, descending even to fidgeting and chatting as the pace slowed and the level of challenge diminished. Many Year 7 pupils are making rapid progress in German because the teaching is purposeful. Audio and printed resources are of good quality, and the lessons are well organised with a good range of activities that encourage nearly all pupils to take an active part in the lesson. However, in both the Year 7 and Year 9 lessons seen the pace dropped in the final third of the lesson. As a result the pupils reached good rather than very good standards.
14. The big improvement in GCE A-level results since the previous inspection is the result of a shared commitment by governors, headteacher, senior managers, teaching staff and students to raise standards. The much sharper and regular monitoring of students' attendance and work is a strong feature of the very good management of their progress. As a result the quality of teaching and learning has improved and standards have risen.

15. For several years before the previous inspection standards in the sixth form had been below the national average. Since then they have risen increasingly above the national average and were well above it in 1998. The average points score has risen from 13.3 to 19 and the average number of passes per student from 2.6 to 3.3. The numbers studying each GCE A-level subject are too small to make valid annual comparisons with national averages but the proportions achieving the highest grades in the Year 2000 examinations were very good in mathematics, art and sociology.
16. The reasons for this very good degree of improvement were well illustrated in the very good teaching seen on several occasions. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson the students reviewed their previous examination answer about Beckett's 'Krapp's Last Tape'. They were encouraged to explore their own ideas and interpretations as the teacher skilfully guided their attention to the details of imagery that further extended their appreciation and understanding of the text. In a very good Year 12 geography lesson all the students developed a very good understanding of the effects of economic change on rural areas because very skilful questioning challenged the students to reflect upon and interpret the significance of geographical change. This enabled them to move confidently from the factual to the conceptual level in their thinking, an important step if they are to achieve the highest grades.

It achieves very high standards in art and music because teachers have very high expectations to which pupils respond very well.

17. The high quality of musical performance and artistic expression is one of the distinctive features of the school, reflecting well the sensitivity, imagination, dexterity and eagerness to improve that distinguishes the excellent attitudes and personal qualities of so many of its pupils and students. There are striking visual images around the school, including an impressive mural in the main entrance foyer and no visitor at lunch-time could miss the sound of music making.
18. A high proportion of pupils choose to study these subjects beyond the age of 14. A large number are involved in regular orchestral practices, showing a readiness to polish and develop their work in their own time. Both subjects make a significant contribution to the excellent level of personal development that is a hallmark of the school. In particular, both subjects foster concentration, perseverance, a concern for precision and opportunities to develop flair.
19. Standards in GCSE examinations in art are very high. It is a very popular subject that is studied by almost half of the year group between the ages of 14 and 16. Nine out of ten candidates have consistently obtained grades A*-C over the previous four years. Both boys and girls achieve standards that are well above the national average. The department is not content with these high standards and regularly reviews its practice in order to improve further. About one-third of the sixth form study art at GCE A-level. In Year 2000, 43 per cent of the students obtained grades A and B, in line with the national average.
20. The pupils and students achieve these very good standards because very high expectations radiate across the department that is very well led and managed. The excellent relationships that are fostered between pupils, students and their teachers promote a high degree of confidence, self-discipline and self-criticism. For example, in a Year 11 art lesson pupils used GCSE assessment criteria to review and evaluate their recent mock examination work. Very good teaching encouraged them to be confident enough to be self-critical. An important feature of this lesson was the way in which the teacher encouraged her pupils to use the work of artists such as Dali and Picasso as a stimulus for original expression rather than as a source merely to imitate or copy. Within the lesson pupils of all abilities were guided to improve their work very effectively because the teacher's high expectations were skilfully translated into practical advice that the pupils could appreciate and use. Through the example of their teachers they learn to appreciate the value of application, experimentation and perseverance as they seek to improve

the quality of their work, using their sketchbooks to very good effect in drafting and developing their visual ideas and expression.

21. In addition, careful monitoring and assessment contribute to the very good standards in art. Many pupils spoke of how highly they valued the individual review interviews that helped them identify clearly their current strengths and weaknesses and also to decide what they needed to do in order to improve further. In addition to the annual report to parents an 'interim' report is issued at the end of the autumn term in Year 10 and in Year 11 an additional report outlines specific tasks that need to be addressed if the pupil's target grade is to be achieved. This ensures that parents are kept fully informed of their child's progress.
22. Excellent curricular planning is linked to very thorough assessment arrangements. Only limited information about pupils' standards in art is received when they enter the school. An initial assessment is made to define levels of skill that then forms the foundation for future target setting. The department is currently examining how it might use the school's cognitive ability testing [CAT] procedures at the age of 11 to bring still greater rigour to its target setting. After the age of 14 very good use is made of commercially produced assessments of the pupils' potential in order to set realistic but challenging targets at the ages of 16 and 18. In order to raise further the standards of the boys, teaching styles and the sort of topics covered have been modified at both key stages.
23. Many pupils consistently achieve similarly high standards in GCSE examinations at the age of 16 in music. Over the last three years it has been an increasingly popular choice at the age of 14 and in Year 2000 nearly one in every five pupils chose to study the subject at GCSE, a high proportion. More than 9 out of 10 candidates have achieved grades A*-C every year since the previous inspection.
24. The foundations for this success lie in the emphasis upon developing musical literacy and performance skills from the start of Year 7. Every pupil learns to play the descant recorder and to read music. Over one hundred pupils subsequently receive additional instrumental tuition, for which no charge is levied, and are able to contribute to the excellent senior and junior school orchestras. Many pupils perform in choirs and in recorder and other instrumental ensembles. Many pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 are entered for Trinity College examinations.
25. Consistently very good standards of teaching were observed during the inspection. For example, in a Year 7 lesson excellent specialist knowledge was used skilfully to explain musical terms and very high expectations were evident in the demonstration of performance skills in singing and also in the precise and helpful assessments that were shared with each pupil after they had played the recorder. Very high expectations were also a very important feature in a very good Year 9 lesson, one of a series in which pupils learned to read a musical score. All the pupils responded very well with a high degree of concentration as they were challenged through skilful questioning to show their understanding of note values in order to follow the score more accurately. The level of challenge became increasingly more demanding as pupils were helped to follow the more difficult first violin score of an air by Bach.
26. High expectations are also expressed in the rigorous target setting that supports very well the progress of all pupils. Each week, pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 are given specific targets linked to fingering, notation, tongueing and slurring in order to improve their playing of the recorder. Half-termly target sheets are helping Year 11 pupils to concentrate on areas for improvement, and increasingly good use is being made of the commercially available assessment data to inform target setting beyond the age of 14. To further inspire and enthuse the pupils, portfolios, including photographs and videos of successful pupils' performances, are being prepared to which all pupils can refer.

The teaching methods in science produce high standards at the age of 14 by encouraging pupils to think scientifically.

27. Standards in science are well above the national average at the age of 14. In the Year 2000 national tests four-fifths of the pupils reached the national expectation, level 5, or better and a third of them exceeded it.
28. When these pupils entered the school in 1997 two-thirds of them had reached the national expectation or better, of whom one tenth exceeded it. The very good progress that both boys and girls make between the ages of 11 and 14 owes much to changes in teaching methods that the department made three years ago when it started to use cognitive acceleration in science [CASE]. It develops well the scientific understanding of middle-attaining pupils and challenges very effectively the higher-attainers. As a result there was a three-fold increase between the ages of 11 and 14 in the proportion of boys and girls achieving above national expectations in the Year 2000 national tests. Additional CASE testing indicates that pupils of all abilities are making good progress in developing scientific thinking.
29. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen during the inspection was generally very good. It was never less than good. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged from the age of 11 to think scientifically and to develop well-disciplined but thoughtful approaches to investigation. In a Year 7 lesson on a rollerball they worked in teams to investigate the effects of changing mass and height on the distance it travelled. Their natural curiosity was very well managed by the teacher through searching questions that really got the pupils thinking. This led them to suggest what might happen and then to test that it did. The higher-attaining pupils in this all ability class were able to suggest modifications to the investigation and to identify anomalies. In a Year 9 lesson higher-attaining pupils showed high levels of understanding of investigative methods as they analysed and evaluated the results of a series of experiments. This enabled them to be more accurate in their observations and recording and sharper in drawing scientific conclusions. Both the boys and the girls learned very well because the teacher's penetrating questions encouraged them to ask questions themselves. Their very good progress was further supported by their very good levels of numeracy and literacy. Teachers use the CASE methodology well to develop these skills. So good has been the progress of these pupils that nearly half of them have a target of Level 8 and are about to start preparing for the national test extension paper.

Very good arrangements for assessment and target setting support pupils' very good progress.

30. There are very good systems in place to track pupils' progress across the key stages. An important strength is the very good link between the assessment of pupils' work, the degree of progress they are making and the challenging targets that are then set at the ages of 14, 16 and 18. The links are also very good between the assessment procedures, the calendar for parents' evenings and school reports. As a result, subject teachers are able to share with parents a very detailed picture of their child's performance to date and future targets.
31. Within the assessment and target setting arrangements there is a good balance between statistical information and evidence arising directly from pupils' work. As a result, departments are not overwhelmed with data. They receive what is necessary to inform accurate and challenging target setting within well-managed arrangements that also respect and value their professional judgement of each pupil's potential.
32. There are comprehensive assessment procedures that ensure an accurate starting point or 'benchmark' for each pupil at the age of 11. These include cognitive ability tests [CATs] that are considered alongside results in the national tests at the age of 11 to evaluate each pupil's current standard. The results provide both an overall year profile of standards and an indicator of individual potential to each subject department. Some departments, for example art and design, conduct further assessment of subject specific skills. There are two opportunities in Year 7 and

a further opportunity in Year 8 for parents to visit the school to review progress against their child's 'benchmark'.

33. There is a very good understanding of National Curriculum levels within subject departments. It is very strong in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and history. This has helped them to develop very good portfolios based on pupils' work. Teachers use them very effectively to check the standards of their pupils' work. Information about National Curriculum levels is also displayed prominently in many classrooms. These serve as a regular reminder to the pupils of the standards needed to reach and exceed national expectations in particular subjects. In design and technology, for example, pupils are issued with written guidance about what they need to do to achieve a particular level and the attitudes they need to develop in order to be successful.
34. Since 1998 there has been a very rigorous and highly effective target setting procedure for all pupils between the ages of 14 and 16. Very good use is made of national test results at the age of 14 in English, mathematics and science and, most recently, of the statutory teachers' assessments in pupils' other subjects to set challenging targets. There is a very good level of consultation and support. The senior management team provides very good leadership in this work. There is a high degree of staff commitment because its purpose was explained clearly from the outset and firmly linked to the aims of the school.
35. High expectations are a strong feature of the school's approach to target setting. The school adopts the upper quartile tables within the national statistics to confirm its targets that are based on a well-considered analysis of results in national tests at the age of 14 and commercially available testing. Targets are reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary. There is a good level of pupil involvement in these arrangements. For example, in modern foreign languages each pupil is interviewed in the spring term of Year 10 with a further review in the autumn term of Year 11. The department uses the results of these discussions to re-define its teaching priorities. As a result assessment is well used to inform planning. In art pupils value highly the interviews with their teachers about what they need to do to improve and the challenge that is set to exceed their target. The very good monitoring and assessment arrangements are very well linked to target setting. These produce excellent results at the age of 16 in art. In science, as well as in other subjects, there are very thorough arrangements to alert parents to a pupil's potential under-achievement. An important result of these very thorough arrangements is that pupils of all abilities want to do well and are highly motivated to do so.
36. These very effective arrangements have been very successful in reducing levels of under-achievement. Senior managers have a very good understanding of the commercially produced tests that the school uses to predict GCSE results in the light of previous levels of attainment at the age of 14. They also use this information very well to review and evaluate the improvements in the performance of pupils across all of their subjects. From this they are able to determine the 'value added' factor and track the improving trend over the last three years at GCSE.
37. There are also very good monitoring, assessment and target setting arrangements in the sixth form. These have made a strong contribution to the improving standards at GCE A-level by increasing student motivation.

A shared commitment to raise standards further by monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is a strong feature of the headteacher's very good leadership and management.

38. The partnership between the headteacher, senior staff and the governing body is very strong. Their shared determination to raise standards is evident across all areas of the school. It is well expressed in the annual development plan.
39. Governors are kept very well informed through the very comprehensive reports prepared by the headteacher. They play an active role in major developments, for example in the review of the school's staffing structure in 1997. They also demonstrate their commitment to high standards by supporting financially the additional instrumental musical tuition for ten per cent of the pupils.
40. The school's aims combine a concern for all pupils to do well academically with a very strong commitment to the full development of personal qualities. There are good arrangements to promote this by linking governors to particular subject departments. This enables them to gain a full picture of what is happening in the school. Heads of subject present analytical reports on examination performance to governors each year and the governing body fulfils very well its responsibilities as a critical friend when reviewing the performance of the school. It sets challenging targets and plays an important role in setting an agenda for improvement in the sixth form.
41. The governors and senior management team also share a strong commitment to professional development. They are supporting a major programme to develop the management skills of heads of subject and have also encouraged the 'multi-skilling' of support staff to improve further the efficiency and effectiveness of the school.
42. The headteacher has been very effective indeed in leading the development of this very successful partnership that is raising standards across the school.

It has established strong links with business, industry and its local community that support pupils' learning well.

43. The school has established very strong links with local business and industry as well as with its partner primary schools and a local hospital that provide very good opportunities for a large number of pupils to apply their skills, particularly in art and design, beyond the classroom. The strength of these links was evident in the large number of representatives from these organisations who met with the inspection team to share their appreciation of their value.
44. Pupils' work has been exhibited on numerous occasions in museums, at Lichfield Cathedral, the Staffordshire Fire Service headquarters, the Victoria Hall and the Design Centre in London.
45. Local business and industry play an important part in the annual Year 9 industry day. This opportunity enables pupils of all abilities to develop team building, problem solving, communication and research skills.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Long term planning for school development is not fully documented.

46. The annual management plan defines very clearly the school's priorities and its determination to raise standards further. Objectives are placed within realistic timescales and broad costings are included. Most recently the school has completed a bid for specialist school status as an arts college. This has required it to prepare plans for the longer term development of the school.
47. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for its development, most recently expressed in its bid for specialist school status as an arts college, but this has not yet been fully

documented and expressed as a strategic development plan. The longer term implications of the school's involvement in 'Excellence in Cities' have not been fully documented. As a result there is no recognition currently of the annual objectives that need to be in place to manage these developments over time. There is a good level of awareness of the required increase in provision and facilities but these have not been linked to the intended outcomes expressed in terms of pupils' achievements and personal development. The vision has not yet been translated into a vivid picture that all can see, work towards and recognise when it has been reached.

48. The school is currently holding financial balances amounting to almost 15 per cent of its total budget, well in excess of the recommended level. These are the product of great initiative shown by the headteacher and his governors to identify and acquire funding from alternative sources from beyond the original annual budget for improving the environment and facilities of the school. Funding from the original budget 'ear-marked' for this purpose is transferred annually to provide for eventual long-term developments. Further building plans have been drawn up but other aspects of the school's longer term development currently lie in the minds of the senior managers and governors rather than being formally documented. The high level of financial foresight needs now to be expressed in a fully documented strategic plan.

The planned teaching of information and communication technology in some subjects is unsatisfactory.

49. All pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 study information and communication technology [ICT] for one hour each week. They make very good progress and standards at the age of 14 are well above the national average. In Year 2000 statutory teacher assessments nine out of ten pupils reached national expectations or better. The boys and the girls achieved similar standards. Just over a third of the Year 11 pupils took the GCSE examination in ICT at the age of 16 in Year 2000, fewer than in previous years, and achieved results broadly in line with the national average. A small number of students continue to study the subject at GCE A-level.
50. Many pupils thus develop a high degree of skill in ICT by the age of 14 and a good proportion develop their skills to the age of 16. However, in the work analysed during the inspection and in the schemes of work in different subjects there is insufficient reference to how these skills will also be applied and further developed.
51. As a result of improvements to the school buildings and the rationalisation of accommodation there are now four computing rooms and cabling for ICT access in each classroom. ICT access to the Internet will shortly be available across the school.
52. It is a requirement of the National Curriculum that the skills of information and communication technology are applied and developed through the different subjects that pupils study between the ages of 11 and 16. Some subjects, including science, history, art and mathematics, have identified the need and opportunity to develop ICT skills but others, such as English and geography, have not yet done so. There is currently no overall co-ordination of the development of ICT skills across the different subjects to assure the full, balanced coverage and progressively more challenging application of the various ICT skills. How, when and why these skills will be taught and applied are not identified clearly enough in schemes of work.

The indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory.

53. The school achieves very good standards in physical education despite the unsatisfactory indoor and outdoor facilities. There are no cricket pitches and the poor condition of the tennis courts make them unusable. The condition of the 'all weather' surface is poor. There is a strong commitment to improve standards still further despite the severely restricted facilities.
54. In order to provide facilities for badminton it is necessary for pupils to travel off-site with a consequent loss of teaching time. Facilities on site are unsatisfactory for the development of volleyball, badminton and basketball skills.
55. There is no dedicated space for the teaching of dance. Opportunities to use the hall for this purpose are sometimes interrupted because it is needed for other uses; this affects the continuity of pupils' learning.
56. The specialist skills of the teachers, including a recently appointed specialist to teach dance on a part-time basis, are high. The motivation of the pupils is very good. In lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching and learning was consistently very good and the standards reached were good. Were adequate facilities to be available there would be the realistic opportunity for standards to rise still further.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. St Margaret Ward Catholic High School is a very good school that already meets the needs of all its pupils very well. In order to become still better the governors and senior management should:
 - (1) document the long term plan for the school's development by:
 - I. involving all staff and governors in a review of current provision;
 - II. including 'Excellence in Cities' priorities and funding within the plan;
 - III. identifying the key long-term objectives for standards of achievement, attendance, curriculum provision, pastoral guidance and partnership with parents;
 - IV. indicating specific and measurable success criteria against which the plan will be monitored and evaluated;
 - V. defining the annual steps that the school will take towards each long term objective;
 - VI. including details of all necessary funding to support the achievement of the key objectives;

(Paragraphs: 46, 47, 48.)

- (2) establish a co-ordinated approach to teach ICT in each subject of the curriculum by:
- I. identifying an individual to be responsible for its management within each subject department;
 - II. requiring that individual to identify how the subject might contribute to the development and further application of these skills, including their contribution in each subject scheme of work;
 - III. ensuring that there is a balanced coverage of all aspects of ICT and that pupils are presented with increasingly challenging work each year;
 - IV. establishing procedures to monitor the overall provision and to evaluate its contribution to the further improvement of standards, particularly beyond the age of 14;

(Paragraphs: 49, 50, 51, 52.)

- (3) provide improved indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education by:
- I. securing funding to implement current building plans;
 - II. renovating the current tennis courts;
 - III. providing on site facilities for a full range of games;

(Paragraphs: 53, 54, 55, 56.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	45	36	15	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	845	89
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	111	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	76	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.08
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	82	71	153

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	42	65	68
	Girls	55	59	56
	Total	96	120	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (81)	82 (68)	80 (74)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (47)	44 (38)	36 (36)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	44	66	65
	Girls	59	62	60
	Total	103	128	125
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (67)	84 (68)	82 (74)
	National	63 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (35)	46 (53)	35 (32)
	National	31(31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	74	76	150

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	32	68	72
	Girls	40	74	74
	Total	72	142	146
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (57)	95 (98)	97 (100)
	National	47.4 (47.9)	90.6 (88.5)	95.6 (94)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	36.5 (41.5)
	National	38.7 (38)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	5	25	30

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.2	19.4	19.0 (16.4)	[0	0	0
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.9)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	22
Bangladeshi	8
Chinese	1
White	900
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani	2	
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	20	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	52.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.0
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Average teaching group size: Y7– Y13

Key Stage 3	27.8
Key Stage 4	24.0
Sixth Form	14.9

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2063119
Total expenditure	2033720
Expenditure per pupil	2209
Balance brought forward from previous year	235400
Balance carried forward to next year	264799

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	934
Number of questionnaires returned	201

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	37	52	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	50	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	52	6	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	47	15	2	0
The teaching is good.	41	54	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	50	20	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	46	7	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	35	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	51	20	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	47	43	3	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	52	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	51	9	3	16