

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL**

Menston, West Yorkshire

LEA area: Leeds

Unique Reference Number: 108094

Headteacher: Mr M Pyle

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe
1025

Dates of inspection: 13th - 16th November 2000

Inspection number: 223935

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:	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:	Fr A Pearson
Dates of previous inspection:	26 th February - 1 st March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mr H Meggitt 13452	Lay Inspector		Partnership with parents
Mr H Heller 5038	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Pupils' attitudes and values; school's care for pupils; leadership and management
Mr J A Paine 11479	Team inspector	English; drama	
Mr R Heath 1262	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mr J N Pinkney 20380	Team inspector	Science	
Mrs W Burke 11190	Team inspector	Art	
Mrs S M Mansell 17277	Team inspector	Design and technology Information technology	
Mr B M Greasley 12470	Team inspector	Geography	Curriculum
Ms C Evers 8873	Team inspector	History	Efficiency/ staffing, accommodation and resources
Mr I H C Waters 4829	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Dr J D Ward 8645	Team inspector	Music	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; assessment
Mr R D Gaunt 8011	Team inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school caters for 1100 boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18. Virtually all its pupils come from Roman Catholic backgrounds. Both the overall social and economic background of pupils and their level of attainment on entry to the school are well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about half the national average. About one per cent of pupils come from families of ethnic minority heritage. The school acquired specialist Sports College status in September 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's is a good school. It has many strong features and few weaknesses. It provides a good standard of education as a result of thorough teaching, an ethos of hard work and a solid foundation of Christian values. Pupils of all levels of ability usually make at least satisfactory progress. The school is well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' attainment is well above the national average in Years 7-11 and better than in most similar schools.
- Mathematics, science and French are strong: teaching is good and the departments are well managed.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils' attendance has been raised to a very good level.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development are all first class.
- Very substantial and effective provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- The school offers a very wide range of extracurricular activities and is particularly strong on sport.

What could be improved

- The amount and rigour of discussion in class and the accuracy of spelling and punctuation.
- Some aspects of teaching, management and resources in art, in design and technology and in information and communication technology (ICT). The statutory curriculum is not provided in ICT.
- The need to monitor all aspects of the school's work to the same high standard.
- Aspects of the school's provision of personal, social, health and careers education and guidance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made sound progress overall since 1996. It has maintained a high standard of education and has remedied most of the weaknesses identified then through careful planning and good management. For example:

- most curricular planning is sound, schemes of work are in operation for all subjects and departmental planning is firmly tied into that of the whole school;
- improved specialist accommodation has been provided for science, art, design and technology, ICT and music;
- general teaching accommodation has been significantly enhanced; and
- appropriate funding is received from the relevant local authorities for pupils with special educational needs.

In contrast, too little progress has been made in increasing the amount of teaching for ICT, especially in Years 7-9: standards are lower than they should be. Statutory curriculum requirements are not met for ICT in Years 7-11.

Pupils' overall standard of attainment in GCSE examinations is very similar to what it was at the last inspection. Achievement at GCE Advanced level is usually average, but dropped in 2000. Teaching has improved further since 1996.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A	A	A	

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The school's results in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2000 were well above average in all of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A much larger proportion of pupils reached the higher (6+) levels than generally do nationally. The 2000 results were well above the average for schools of a similar kind (as measured by the proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals). Standards in the three subjects have remained at a high level over the 1996-2000 period and have risen slightly faster than the rising trend nationally. By the end of Year 9, standards in the school are above average in most other subjects, but are average in art, ICT and music. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress in their studies from Year 7 to Year 9.

Results in GCSE are well above the national average. The overall standard is better than the average for schools of a similar character. The strongest subjects in GCSE over the 1996-1999 period were mathematics, science, French and vocational subjects. Art, design and technology and ICT were the weakest subjects. Pupils generally make a satisfactory rate of progress in Years 10-11. The school's GCSE results in 2000 were slightly below its targets. The targets for 2001 are realistic and achievable.

In the sixth form, achievement in GCE A-level examinations was, on most measures, average over the 1996-1999 period for both the quality of grades obtained and the pass rate. In 2000, however, although the pass rate remained average, there was a significant decline in the proportion of higher (A-B) grades obtained and too many pupils made unsatisfactory progress in their studies: weaknesses in teaching and monitoring pupils' progress as well as building disruption were the major factors. On General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses achievement was above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Generally good and often excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils show a high level of respect for other people, the buildings and other property.
Personal development and relationships	A great strength. Pupils are responsible and mature. A strong sense of community here.
Attendance	Very good. Punctuality for lessons is good.

All these elements are considerable strengths of the school. The school's climate for learning is strong.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
in the lessons seen overall	good	good	good

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

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons, good in 45 per cent and very good (occasionally outstanding) in 28 per cent of those seen. Three per cent of lessons had unsatisfactory teaching. In well-taught lessons pupils make good progress through clear explanations, a brisk pace and interesting, rigorous work. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by low intellectual demand and a slow pace. Teaching in English and mathematics is good overall throughout the school. Most aspects of literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily taught, but spelling and punctuation throughout the school require more attention. Teachers cater well for pupils of different levels of attainment and ability. Most pupils want to learn. They generally work hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Mostly satisfactory in breadth and balance, but gaps in design and technology, ICT, personal education and careers. Good subject spread in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Generally good. Specialist teaching is incorporated soundly within small classes. Effective organisation and close links with external agencies.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	These are very good overall. Comprehensive provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is firmly rooted in Christian beliefs and values. A very orderly community with a strong social conscience. Cultural provision is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A caring environment in which pupils generally feel very secure. More attention needs to be given to a few aspects of health and safety.

The school has generally effective and increasing links with parents, who hold it in high regard. Little advance information is, however, provided about what is studied (especially in Years 7-9) and reports to parents lack sufficient clarity. Most curricular planning is effective. Improvements are, however, needed so that all pupils receive sufficient teaching of ICT (Years 7-11) and of personal, social and careers education (Years 10-13). A very wide range of extracurricular activities is provided. The school's high standard of care for pupils is weakened by the unsatisfactory implementation of health and safety policies and by inadequate facilities for pastoral staff.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives clear-sighted, energetic leadership. Most senior and middle managers are effective. As a result, most major changes are accomplished smoothly. There is insufficient monitoring of policies.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body supports all aspects of the school's life. It works through an appropriate range of committees. It does not, however, have a sufficiently strategic view of the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good progress over the last two years from a low base: systems are mainly satisfactory for academic monitoring, and improving rapidly.
The strategic use of resources	Sound financial planning and monitoring of expenditure. Buildings much improved, but still more to do. Very high spending on resources has addressed most deficiencies.

Management, accommodation and resources have improved to a good level over the last three years. The provision of teaching staff is good, but technical help is insufficient in art and in design and technology. Accommodation and learning resources are good overall. The school applies the principles of "best value", but not comprehensively.

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's ethos of hard work and achievement. • Pupils' good progress and personal development. • Good quality of teaching and management. • The high quality of pastoral care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCE A-level results. • The depth of contact with parents.

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views parents express. The school puts appropriate emphasis on the virtues of effort and achievement. It enables most pupils to make at least satisfactory progress, although the GCE A-level results in 2000 were (unusually) not good enough. The quality of teaching is good overall and the school is well managed. Pupils and their parents feel confident in the pastoral care that the school provides. The school does not, however, provide enough detailed information about the content of the curriculum or sufficient clarity about pupils' attainments and progress. Overall, parents and the wider community rightly have a very favourable and optimistic view of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The overall standard of attainment of pupils in the school is well above the national average at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. It is broadly average in the sixth form. Pupils' achievement is well above average overall in the national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. It is usually average at GCE Advanced (A) level.

2. When pupils come to the school in Year 7, their overall level of attainment is already well above what is often found nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5+ in the national tests taken towards the end of Year 6 in primary schools, for example, is always much higher than the national average: about nine out of every ten pupils reach the minimum expected standard of Level 4, but normally at least one third of all pupils (in 2000 nearly half) reach at least Level 5. Over 90 per cent of the school's pupils (about 75 per cent nationally in 2000) therefore start their secondary education with an overall standard in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at least at the national benchmark of Level 4.

3. In the national tests taken three years later at the end of Year 9 in 2000, the proportion of pupils who achieved the national standard of at least the basic Level 5 (about 90 per cent) was well above average in English, mathematics and science. The proportion reaching at least the higher Level 6 (over two-thirds) was also well above average. Compared with the national picture, far more pupils than usual in this school reach the higher levels. They do equally well in all three core subjects. Over the period 1995-2000 the school's results have risen steadily and consistently, and at a faster rate than the rising trend nationally. The average level that the school's pupils reach in these national tests has risen by about one-sixth since the last inspection. The rise has been more pronounced at the higher levels.

4. Girls achieve a little more than boys in the English tests overall by the end of Year 9. In mathematics and science both sexes achieve about the same, although boys have a slight edge. Over the 1996-2000 period, with minor variations over the years, both boys and girls have generally performed in line with their respective sexes nationally - albeit at a level that is well above average. Teachers' assessments are usually very close to the test results that pupils achieve.

5. When these Key Stage 3 results for 1999 and 2000 are compared with those in schools which have a similar background (as measured solely by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed very well. At Level 5+, for example, attainment was well above the group average in all of English, mathematics and science. At the higher Level 6+ attainment was very high in English and mathematics, but at a lower (though still above average) level in science. Pupils' average points score for the three subjects was high: attainment in all three core subjects was well above average in both years.

6. In the five other (non-core) subjects formally assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000, teachers judged the overall attainment of pupils currently in Year 10 as well above average in design and technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages. They judged that overall attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) was lower than the rest, but still above average. Inspectors agree that in most subjects greater proportions of pupils than usual reach the national standards of at least Level 5 or Level 6. In ICT, however, overall attainment is judged to be below average because of the low amount of time given to this subject in the school.

7. As pupils move through the school from Year 7 to the end of Year 9, they generally make satisfactory progress in their studies. For example, the proportions of pupils in Year 9 who attained Level 5+ or Level 6+ in the national tests in 2000 were broadly similar to the relevant levels they had reached three years earlier; the average "points scores" that pupils achieved over the same period tell a similar story. Although the school

does not have comprehensive sets of data about pupils' attainments for other three-year periods (a situation that is very rapidly improving through significant efforts by senior management), the limited evidence available suggests a similar picture for earlier year groups.

8. In GCSE examinations in 2000 pupils' overall level of attainment was well above average - for pupils' average points scores and for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C. The proportion gaining five or more grades A*-G was a little lower, but still above average. The school's results over the 1994-2000 period have been consistently high. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more of the higher (A*-C) grades, for example, was 67-73 per cent against a national average of 41-46 per cent. The average points score that pupils obtained has also been well above average. It has, however, remained fairly constant in the 46-48 points range over the 1994-2000 period, whilst the national trend has been rising. In the core subjects pupils' achievement in GCSE in 1999 was well above the national average in all of English, mathematics and science. It remained very high in English in 2000, but dipped a little in mathematics and science.

9. When pupils' performances in the various subjects they took over the 1996-1999 period are compared with one another, pupils did significantly better in all four years in mathematics, science and French, but worse in art and (in three out of these four years) in design and technology and in ICT. In 2000 no pupil achieved the highest A* grade in art, child development or in most aspects of design and technology. No boy achieved this top grade in English literature, chemistry, double science, French, music or business studies.

10. Girls have achieved a greater proportion of the higher A*-C grades in GCSE than boys over the last few years. The gap varied between 17 and 21 percentage points during the 1994-1996 period, narrowed to around the national average (between 9 and 11 points) in 1997-1999, but opened up again to 18 points in 2000. The gap between the sexes is broadly the result of girls maintaining their overall level of performance, whilst boys slipped back in 2000 to the kind of level they achieved in 1995-1996. Roughly the same proportions of boys and girls achieve at least five grades A*-G. In most years, however, boys in this school achieve a little less than the girls, when their results are compared with what the sexes achieve nationally.

11. When the school's average points scores at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was better than most in both 1998 and 1999 [comparative national evidence was not available for 2000 at the time of the inspection]. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C was above the group average in 1998 and well above it in 1999. By the same measure, pupils' overall performance was well above the group average in all of English, mathematics and science.

12. The limited evidence available about the intake of pupils suggests that pupils make satisfactory progress over Years 7-9. They maintain satisfactory progress also over Years 10-11. These rates of progress are generally in line with that made by pupils in similar kinds of schools. The school did not quite reach its three main GCSE targets in 2000. Its targets for 2001 are reasonable and attainable.

13. In the sixth form, overall results at GCE A-level for those pupils entered for two or more subjects have been consistently well above average over the 1994-1999 period for total average points scores gained by each pupil. In 2000 they declined to a point a little below average. The earlier high average ratings are partly explained by the fact that most pupils take general studies at A-level in addition to three other subjects, thereby raising their total scores. In contrast, both the pass rates and the quality of grades obtained are broadly average.

14. All pupils who took the GCE A-level examination in 2000 passed in physics, art, French, German, music, sports studies and religious education (RE). Only one pupil failed in each of English literature, further mathematics, chemistry, history and ICT. In no subject was the pass rate below three-quarters. The level of success in the sixth form on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses at Intermediate and Advanced levels in 2000 was above average.

15. Pupils' performances at GCE A-level in 2000 showed at least satisfactory progress in just over half

the cases from their earlier achievement in the same subject at GCSE: about one fifth of pupils made satisfactory progress from their level of attainment two years earlier and over a third made good progress. The progress of pupils was, however, unsatisfactory in almost half of these comparable subject entries - a serious weakness. The variety of reasons for the decline in 2000 includes a lack of study facilities caused by extensive building works (now completed) and weaknesses in both teaching and the monitoring of pupils' progress (both of which issues are being thoroughly addressed).

16. In work seen during the inspection pupils' overall standard of attainment ranged from very high to below average, but was, in its statistical spread and concentration, well above that normally found nationally for pupils of similar ages. Attainment is broadly similar throughout the school. The level of attainment was at least average in nine out of ten lessons seen. This is a sound achievement by the school, but can be still higher if weaknesses in a minority of teaching are brought up to the good quality of the majority.

17. In English the overall attainment of pupils is well above average throughout the school in all the elements of reading, writing and speaking. The majority of pupils read confidently and accurately and are used to searching for detailed written evidence to support their views. A few lower-attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 3, lack confidence in reading aloud. A very wide range of written work shows a good level of competence in planning, drafting and refining information and viewpoints. Presentation and handwriting are above average, but spelling and punctuation do not reach the same high standard and require a concerted effort to improve phonemic skills in particular. Pupils usually listen to their teachers and to one another very carefully. Most speak clearly and have the vocabulary and confidence to sustain an extended discussion.

18. In all other subjects across the school pupils' standard of reading is above average. With a few exceptions, pupils read aloud fluently and accurately and with appropriate expression. The majority are quick to skim a wide variety of written material, to extract the key points and to understand the implications of what they read. Particularly good instances of this were seen in geography and history. In contrast, some written material was not demanding enough in design and technology. Pupils are generally keen on reading and draw heavily on the library's stock of books: an unusually high proportion of boys, for example, read for pleasure.

19. The content of what pupils write is above average overall. In most instances it is clearly planned and structured - often impressively so in geography, history and vocational studies, but at an average standard in science, art, design and technology, and music. Note-taking is distinctly better than usual and a few teachers give clear guidance about the skills and techniques involved: quick, neat and accurate note-taking is a particular strength of many specialist ICT lessons. Presentation and handwriting are usually carefully done. There is much exemplary work in geography, but an average standard in art and in design and technology.

20. Spelling and punctuation vary very widely, but are average overall in most subjects (though poor in art) and should be better. The lower standard in these aspects is a result of insufficient emphasis and monitoring by teachers corporately, insufficient prominence given by most departments to displays of technical or specialist vocabulary and often a degree of carelessness by pupils - as, for example, when copying from books or blackboard. In contrast, specialist vocabulary is prominently displayed in design and technology, geography, history, ICT and music. Geography (where these standards are above average) is a model of good practice: here lists of key words are reinforced by very careful marking that includes high attention to spelling.

21. The overall standard of speaking in the school is above average. Pupils normally speak clearly and audibly and with appropriate intonation. Most have the confidence to express their point of view and occasionally take the initiative in doing so. They enjoy discussions in class and are very willing to offer an informed opinion. In a lesson in personal, social and health education, for example, pupils in Year 8 voluntarily suggested alternative viewpoints and courteously challenged an orthodox stance. The emphasis in mathematics on expecting pupils to explain their reasoning is one important factor in that department's high success. Technical vocabulary is used well in design and technology. Across the school, however, few opportunities are given to pupils for extended discussion and presentation, with the result that some limitation is placed on the depth and subtlety of their understanding and on their competence in studying independently. Most pupils listen very carefully to their teachers and very sensitively to other pupils in class.

22. The overall standard of mathematics is well above average at all stages in the school. Pupils' overall knowledge and skills in numeracy are good enough to support their learning in all subjects across the curriculum effectively. Pupils have a generally good level of competence in using numbers and measures, in knowledge of shapes and their properties and in data-handling, as a consequence of methodical and dedicated teaching. The weakest elements are the mental manipulation of numbers and the ready recall of basic number facts in Key Stage 3 because of insufficient regular practice.

23. In nearly all other subjects the overall attainment of pupils is above what pupils achieve nationally. Their attainments are, however, average in art and music at the end of Key Stage 3 and in history in the sixth form. Attainment in ICT and business studies is a little below average at the end of Key Stage 4. The overall standard is well above average in modern foreign languages at the end of Key Stage 4 and in science at the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted generally make sound progress. Because pupils in this school are keen to learn and are well behaved, the standards they reach in subjects are usually in direct proportion to the quality of teaching they receive or (in the case of ICT) to the amount of time given to the subject.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

24. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally very good and often excellent. The school provides a very secure and orderly environment, with a strong sense of community and a climate of mutual respect. It is permeated by a strong Catholic ethos.

25. Pupils come readily to school and show a strong interest in the provision made for them, both within and outside lesson times. In class they show very positive attitudes to work. They settle readily to the tasks before them and maintain their interest and motivation throughout. In only a very small number of lessons (about two per cent) are pupils' attitudes less than satisfactory - usually the result of a lower level of interest through unstimulating teaching.

26. Behaviour around the school is very good. Pupils show a high level of respect for the buildings and other property. They form constructive and respectful relationships with one another, with their teachers and with other adults. The characteristic demeanour of pupils is responsible, mature and good-humoured.

27. There is no evidence of any significant occurrence of bullying or other form of harassment among pupils. Where such incidents do occur, staff are quick to intervene and to deal firmly with the issue. In general, pupils show understanding and respect for the values and achievements of other people.

28. Pupils have a good capacity to assume responsibility and to exercise initiative. This is demonstrated in the work of prefects, school librarians and in the many community and charitable activities in which pupils are involved. There is at present, however, no body such as a school council through which pupils could gain experience in consultation and decision-making. The rate of exclusions is very low for a school of this size. In the last school year, for instance, there were no permanent and only 13 fixed-term exclusions. The rate of exclusions has declined significantly since the last inspection.

29. The attendance of pupils has been sustained at a good level since the last inspection. It improved still further in the last academic year to a very good level overall. In the 1999-2000 academic year pupils' overall attendance was 94.6 per cent, well above the national average of 91.0 per cent. The level of authorised absences in 1999-2000 (5.3 per cent) was better than the national average. The amount of absence without good reason in the same year was very low indeed. During the week of the inspection there was, very unusually, a high incidence (about 13 per cent) of absence, nearly always because of illness. The school's high level of attendance has been maintained through a concerted and effective effort by staff and through close cooperation with parents.

30. The school's public documents urge parents to regard good attendance and punctuality as very important matters, and the school puts a high degree of emphasis on pupils' achievement of regular

attendance and punctuality. Registers are, in the main, well kept. A significant minority, however, have a variety of imperfections (especially blanks) and are inadequately monitored. The school has satisfactory manual systems for recording pupils' attendance, but does not have detailed analyses of the reasons for pupils' absences or to pinpoint potential problems.

31. Pupils' punctuality for school and for lessons is generally very good. Around 40 pupils on average, however, are late for school each day. The limited evidence available suggests that the major reason for lateness is delayed public transport, but the school does not require pupils to indicate the reasons for their lateness in the official Late Book. There is no evidence that truancy is a problem at this school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

32. The quality of teaching is good and a strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons - satisfactory in almost a quarter of lessons and good in nearly half of them. Additionally, over a quarter of the school's teaching, a significant proportion, is very good. It is occasionally outstanding. Only seven out of the 220 lessons inspected had teaching that was unsatisfactory and required substantial improvement. The quality of teaching is of the same high standard overall throughout the school. On the limited evidence available from 1996, teaching has improved over the last four years. Because pupils are well motivated and very well behaved, teachers in this school can give of their best.

33. Teachers know their subjects well. As a result most present and discuss teaching material thoroughly. In the best lessons they provide extensive information and very relevant illustrations that explain topics clearly and maintain pupils' interest. They use their specialist knowledge to inspire and guide pupils, as, for example, when a teacher's own drawing skills in art or vocalisation in music set a high standard and encouraged pupils to try harder. Revision is often well structured, because teachers have a comprehensive overview of their material. A vocational lesson in ICT in Year 10, too, was very well planned and sequenced because it drew on the teacher's thorough knowledge of GNVQ criteria.

34. Most pupils come to the school with at least a reasonable command of basic literacy and numeracy. Teachers generally build satisfactorily on this standard. A few departments such as design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education (PE) encourage familiarity with specialist or technical vocabulary by displaying key words prominently in classrooms. Overall, however, there is insufficient emphasis on correct punctuation and spelling throughout the school with the result that, overall, pupils achieve an average standard in these elements when they could do better. Similarly, although the basics of arithmetic calculations are well taught and used, mental and oral agility in mathematics is average overall, in contrast to the well above average standard in the subject generally, because pupils are insufficiently required to manipulate numbers orally. This relative weakness is being addressed vigorously.

35. Lessons are well planned. Most teachers have a clear idea of precisely what they wish to achieve in a lesson or over a series of lessons. In the best instances teachers spell out clearly to pupils the structure, sequence and purpose of activities, take good account of what pupils already know and ensure that a varied range of work extends learning further. Tasks are very precisely focused. In a significant minority of lessons, however, teachers do not explain to pupils the shape or purpose of what is to come. Particularly in these lessons they do not set, communicate and keep to clear time-scales for the various stages of lessons: the result is that pupils cannot be sure how long they have to complete work set and either rush their work or fail to complete tasks.

36. The majority of teachers set suitably high standards for pupils, requiring pupils to concentrate hard, think carefully, examine possible solutions thoroughly and communicate their findings in appropriate, specialist language. In the best lessons teachers pose questions that do not simply expect predetermined answers, but open up pupils' minds and expect some originality or creativity. They set very worthwhile tasks and give pupils enough time to develop their own ideas. They often go further by encouraging vigorous debate, expecting pupils to examine all available information or solutions, to back up their answers with relevant evidence and to defend their point of view. They frequently move thinking into new ground by the use of such

phrases as “can anyone think of...?”, “I wonder what would happen if...” or the simple word “why?”. They use questioning effectively to check pupils’ understanding and the impact of their own teaching.

37. In a minority of lessons, however, many opportunities are lost to deepen pupils’ knowledge or understanding. Sometimes ideas are left at too simple a level, alternative explanations are not considered or superficiality takes precedence over depth. Normally in these lessons pupils are presented with pre-wrapped information that makes little demand on their thinking or concentration.

38. The range of teaching methods used is at least satisfactory (and often good) in the majority of lessons. It is usual to find that lessons are introduced well by the teacher, so that pupils understand what is coming and what they have to do. The central part of these lessons usually includes a suitable variety of tasks and appropriate use of group or paired work alongside whole-class activities. Most lessons conclude with a summative review that is, in the best cases, crisp, penetrating and comprehensive.

39. In a few lessons, in contrast, pupils can only guess at the purpose of lessons as they move along. The main part of a significant minority of lessons requires pupils to be largely passive and to listen for long periods. In these, teachers talk too much and normally tell pupils what to do and think.

40. The opportunity for, and careful management of, rigorous discussion in pairs, groups or across the whole class is very well done in a minority of lessons. In these cases pupils learn much in an atmosphere of intellectual stimulation and obvious enjoyment. In a significant number of classes, however, pupils are given little opportunity to brainstorm, to analyse or to discuss incisively the information and ideas presented to them. The result is that pupils’ minds and creativity are insufficiently exercised; that they are unused to working with sufficient independence or initiative; and that they make broadly satisfactory progress when they could make good or very good progress.

41. Lessons are generally very well managed. The school has a very positive climate of good relationships and manners and pupils respond enthusiastically to interesting work. Most classes are models of good behaviour, gentle humour and encouragement. Very rarely is progress impeded because of loose control by the teacher and idle chatter or day-dreaming by pupils.

42. Time is normally used well. Most lessons proceed at a good pace. As a result much ground is covered and, as in a mathematics lesson in Year 11, pupils move on rapidly through a series of problems of increasing difficulty. Occasionally the pace of lessons is plodding and much more could be accomplished in the time available. Pupils’ work is usually monitored and marked carefully: in the best cases (as in geography and ICT) teachers give pupils clear guidance as to how work can be improved and what has to be done to reach top grades - all conducted within an atmosphere of sensitive guidance. Homework is generally set appropriately to reinforce or extend what has been learnt in school.

43. Overwhelmingly, teaching is good throughout the school. It is very good in history in Key Stage 3 and in music in the sixth form. It is broadly satisfactory overall in art in Key Stage 3, and (although sometimes very good) in modern foreign languages in the sixth form. It varies widely in ICT across subjects, but is satisfactory overall; nearly all the specialist teaching of ICT, however, is very good. Teaching on sixth-form GNVQ courses ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. In all other subjects and key stages teaching is good. Some very good teaching was seen in all subjects. At least a third of the teaching was very good in mathematics, geography, history, ICT and PE. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in mathematics and PE.

44. The quality of learning is at least satisfactory in lessons and is usually good. Pupils make a very similar rate of progress in their studies as they move through the school. Very substantial progress is made in lessons in geography in Years 10-11 and in ICT in the sixth form. In contrast, learning is broadly satisfactory, but could be greater, in art, design and technology and music in Years 7-9 and in modern foreign languages in the sixth form. Progress in the sixth form is usually sound, but a significant proportion of pupils who took GCE A-level in 2000 made less progress than they should have done.

45. There are many reasons why most pupils learn well and make sound progress in their studies. The

quality of teaching is generally good. Pupils behave very well and can be trusted to get on with their work. The majority want to take full advantage of the opportunities for learning that the school provides. They are interested, generally enthusiastic and capable of concentrating hard. High-attaining pupils, including those who are particularly gifted, generally make good progress. The enrichment done in mathematics is a good example of additional intellectual bite. Pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress.

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

46. The curriculum offers a satisfactory range of learning opportunities and mostly meets the needs of all pupils at the school. The breadth and balance of the curriculum are satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) each subject of the National Curriculum and RE is taught. Pupils study one modern foreign language, with one third of pupils studying two in Years 8 and 9. All pupils study personal, social and health education (PSHE) throughout Years 7-9 for one lesson each fortnight, including teaching on sex and anti-drugs education. They have timetabled lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) only in Year 7.

47. In Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) all pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, a GCSE course in RE, one modern foreign language and PE. An appropriate range of optional subjects (including business education and drama) is offered for GCSE examinations. An Internet-based General National Vocational Qualification (IGNVQ) course is provided in ICT. A good range of courses is offered in Years 12-13. No timetabled time is provided for teaching PSHE; the arrangements that are made to provide the programme are inadequate.

48. The curriculum meets statutory requirements except in Years 7-11 for ICT. The lack of teaching time for ICT was also reported at the time of the previous inspection and inadequate progress has been made since 1996 in addressing this weakness. There is no timetabled provision for ICT for all pupils in Years 8-10. Provision in other subjects across the curriculum is inconsistent and insufficient to enable pupils to develop the full range of skills required to meet statutory requirements. About one third of pupils have been officially "disapplied" from design and technology in Year 10, in order to concentrate on a second modern foreign language, music or PE (GCSE). Teaching time in Years 8-9 is a little low to teach the second foreign language effectively. The school's total teaching time of 25 hours each week is in line with that recommended by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).

49. All pupils study the full range of subjects provided. Pupils are generally taught in mixed-attainment groups, but are taught in classes of similar attainment in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages in Years 8-11 (as well as in mathematics in Year 7 and science in Year 9), and in science and some optional subjects in Years 10-11. These arrangements are effective. Alternative accreditation is appropriately offered in mathematics, design and technology, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and music. A Youth Award scheme is available for those for whom a full range of GCSE examinations is not appropriate.

50. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is generally good. It is largely organised through pupils being placed in small teaching groups. This is an effective arrangement. Pupils make good progress, especially in English and mathematics. Mainstream departments generally recognise and provide well for the needs of these pupils and individual education plans are, in the main, actively used. There is insufficient time and expertise, however, to deal effectively with severe reading difficulties ("dyslexia") in all cases. The school's policies and practice comply with national regulations. Relations with external agencies are good: both the school's overall work and that of the coordinator are well regarded.

51. The procedures for curricular planning and for monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum are sound. The links between the senior management team and subject departments that have been initiated are generally satisfactory and there is a sound system of curricular review. Schemes of work have improved since the time of the last inspection and are good in mathematics, science, history and PE, and satisfactory elsewhere. There is good coordination of programmes of work within subjects, with very good

planning in English, science and geography. The school has a policy for raising the standards in literacy as part of the National Literacy Strategy, but this has not been implemented rigorously or coordinated effectively across all subjects. An initiative, as part of the National Numeracy Strategy, to raise standards of numeracy still further is in place only in Year 7 in mathematics.

52. A very good range of extracurricular activities enhances the curriculum. Out-of-school residential visits include an outdoor pursuits week for pupils in Year 8, exchange visits to France and Germany, and retreats for senior pupils. The choir and orchestra give regular concerts and the school presents two major musical or dramatic productions each year. There is a range of speaking, writing and mathematics competitions. Sports teams take part in an extensive programme of inter-school and inter-house fixtures; many pupils participate in master classes and receive individual coaching. Approximately 60 per cent of pupils are involved in competitive sports and there is a strong and willing commitment from 15 members of the teaching staff, supported by personnel from sporting organisations. A good programme of study support is provided by almost all subjects.

53. The provision for careers education is satisfactory in Years 7-9, where the appropriate programme is taught by form tutors as part of the PSHE course. In Years 10-11 provision is unsatisfactory. There is no timetable for PSHE lessons and a full scheme of work for careers cannot be taught as a coherent course during the irregular and infrequent opportunities provided. The arrangements for careers guidance are good. Impartial careers advice is given by the careers service and is appropriately focused on a small number of pupils in greatest need. In addition, all pupils in Year 11 have two careers interviews with a member of the school's senior management team.

54. All pupils in Year 10 participate for two weeks at the end of the summer term in well-organised work experience. There is an adequate programme of preparation, but opportunities are missed to strengthen pupils' knowledge of job applications, selection and workplace procedures. During the placement pupils complete a diary, but not all were visited last year by a member of staff. Immediately after the placement pupils take part in a satisfactory programme of follow-up work. There is a small careers library to which access is good, as it forms part of the main school library. A recent reorganisation of this library has ensured that it is adequate.

55. There are good links with the local community. The Sports College Management Group includes members from the local business community and the school's governors have formed a suitable Community Liaison Committee. New initiatives have developed through a successful partnership with Ampleforth College. Good relationships are maintained with local primary schools and purposeful liaison has resulted in curricular links being strengthened, particularly in mathematics. Links with institutions of higher education are satisfactory and improving: one institution of initial teacher training regularly works in the school.

56. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good overall. A strong commitment to the Catholic faith and its teachings provides a secure foundation for the fostering of these aspects of pupils' development. Religious signs and symbols, the central location of the Chapel and the fact that the school's daily routine begins with prayer all serve as constant reminders to pupils to reflect on their faith and conduct.

57. Provision for pupils' spiritual growth is very strong. Assemblies are essentially religious occasions. A full liturgical calendar encompasses the numerous celebrations and rituals in the school year. These include regular masses, days of recollection, residential retreats and, importantly, celebrations of Christmas and Holy Week as well as all Holy days. All pupils are prepared for Advent and Lent. Strong links are maintained with the diocese and parishes. The school chaplain's contribution further ensures good continuity of spiritual experiences for pupils. Spiritual experience also comes through the daily curriculum. In science, for example, pupils' sense of wonder is enhanced when they study astronomy. In art they look at and make their own images of Christian symbols, and in French they reflect on their own early life, as part of their programme of study.

58. Very good provision of moral education is rooted in the school's Christian beliefs and values and its orderly ethos. Teachers set very good examples of conduct and respect. Discipline is firm and fair. There is, however, an overall emphasis on building pupils' sense of self-esteem that contributes very well to good conduct and moral attitudes. Sixth-form pupils perform their duties well: they provide, for instance, a good example for younger pupils (and teach them) how to move around the school with consideration for others.

59. All pupils are encouraged to take part in such community and national projects as CAFOD and Amnesty International that help those who are disadvantaged or less fortunate than themselves. A large sum was recently raised in connection with the Advent Appeal. Strong moral messages are presented in assemblies and in RE as well as in the daily curriculum. In PE pupils have excellent opportunities to learn about rules and fair play. In geography and history they study and reflect on issues connected with slavery, child labour, abortion and environmental pollution.

60. Pupils' social development is very well promoted. Lunch arrangements, for example, are very well organised, with sufficient space and serving points contributing to an atmosphere that promotes good manners and mature conversation. Social areas are provided for pupils in the sixth form and in Year 11. On wet days all pupils are allowed in the school building at lunchtime; this facility is not, however, granted in cold weather.

61. A good range of extracurricular activities, including sport (where the range is very good), enables pupils to meet and work with new friends. A residential camp for pupils in Year 8, overseas visits in connection with modern foreign languages and a visit to Lourdes all contribute to pupils' social development in unfamiliar contexts. The school's link with Ampleforth College further widens their social horizons. Overall, the school's religious base serves to encourage pupils to engage in good works and to be generally caring and kindly toward one another.

62. Pupils experience responsibility through the prefect system. Older pupils are much in evidence on open days and evenings, and are especially helpful to pupils who join the school in Year 7. In many lessons, and especially in PE, pupils are given regular opportunities to take responsibility for equipment. A good number of pupils from all year groups undertake useful duties in the library. There is no school council or similar means to enable pupils to experience the workings and responsibilities of citizenship at first hand.

63. Within the daily curriculum pupils gain some experience of working in pairs and groups. This happens particularly in science, design and technology, music and PE. Pupils gain additional similar experience through such activities as fieldwork in geography and musical projects with primary schools.

64. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The major faiths and traditions are studied in RE. Pupils learn about dietary and cultural differences in their French and German studies; in history they undertake a study of Islam; and in music they sing, play and listen to a wide range of pieces from Europe, Africa, China and India. In geography they study the contrast between communities in British inner cities and the Amazonian rainforests. More immediate cultural experiences are provided through links with local sports clubs and through regular school productions of musicals (such as *The Sound of Music*) that involve teaching staff and other adults. They have, however, limited opportunities for face-to-face meetings with groups such as professional artists, dancers and musicians or with speakers from ethnic minority communities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

65. The school is a caring environment, in which pupils feel secure and part of a community of shared values and aspirations. Staff show deep concern for pupils' well-being and generally respond directly and sensitively to their needs. There is a strong emphasis on personal and spiritual guidance within the substantial programmes of RE. The influence of Catholic values pervades the work of the school.

66. There are, however, some aspects of the overall provision for the care, welfare and guidance of pupils that do not fully support these positive attitudes and aspirations. There is at present, for example, no regular nursing provision in the school. The procedures for supervising and caring for children who become unwell are inadequate. Whilst the school has adopted a sound overall policy for health and safety, this is insufficiently implemented, monitored and documented. The assessments of risk, for instance, are not conducted regularly in each area of the school. There are also such specific hazards as the lack of means to extract dust and fumes both from the design and technology workshops and for the kiln in art. There has been no fire-drill during the current school year, despite the arrival of 200 new pupils, the opening of new buildings and many new staff. The school has not produced a formal policy statement or guidelines for staff in relation to child protection matters, although it has adopted the local authority's guidelines.

67. Form tutors are primarily responsible for the personal welfare and development of pupils: they form teams led by experienced and committed heads of year. The operation of this sound pastoral system is limited, however, by some significant weaknesses. Form tutors have only limited time in direct contact with their pupils and this is largely spent in registration. The tutorial programme in Key Stage 3 (a one hour lesson each fortnight) is rarely taught by the relevant form tutor. Unsatisfactorily, heads of year do not have adequate facilities from which to carry out their pastoral duties, including the personal guidance and counselling of individual pupils.

68. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is unsatisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in the timetabled aspects of this work in Key Stage 3 is of a lower quality than the general teaching across the school. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form there is no specifically timetabled provision: essential elements such as careers education and guidance, education about drugs and sex education, and aspects of citizenship and life skills have to be covered either within other subject periods (for example, science and RE) or by suspension of the regular timetable to permit the mounting of special activities. This structure does not provide a coherent or comprehensive coverage of these important elements. The provision of personal and career guidance in the sixth form is patchy and inadequate overall.

69. The school ensures good behaviour through a sound system of rewards and sanctions, and tries, often successfully, to involve pupils in managing their own conduct. Guidance for pupils about subject and study options at the end of the two key stages is generally effective. A sound start has been made on monitoring the academic progress of pupils. Although a coherent, school-wide system is not fully in place, substantial progress has been made, particularly during the last few months. The programmes of work provided for pupils with statements of special educational need generally match closely the recommendations contained in those statements.

70. The school has a sound assessment policy that gives suitable guidance on the assessment, marking, recording and reporting of pupils' work. It also includes detailed advice on setting targets for pupils. Within subject departments the quality of day-to-day assessment of individual pupils' work is good overall. It is very good in science, but inadequate for ICT work across the school. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is regular and sound. Marking procedures are good overall; in geography they are very good.

71. Subject departments assess work to a common grading system. In those subjects which require assessment to national criteria the day-to-day evaluations of pupils' work relate to those levels well overall. In Years 10-11 and in the sixth form, assessments relate firmly to the requirements of external examinations and, as a consequence, provide both good indications of the progress of pupils and clear targets for improvement. Consistency in grading and in marking procedures has improved since the previous inspection to a satisfactory level.

72. Procedures for assessing, recording and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress across the school are satisfactory overall. Substantial progress has been made since the last inspection on these aspects, particularly during the last few months. The analysis of the progress of individuals and groups as they move through Years 10-11 and into the sixth form is very thorough. It provides reliable information

for tracking individual pupils' progress and for monitoring overall standards. As a result of the school's recent careful review of assessment procedures in Years 7-9, a range of reliable data is now used satisfactorily for tracking, target-setting and overall monitoring. Work currently in hand to increase the consistency and validity of departmental judgements promises to create a comprehensive and robust system of assessment.

73. Parents receive regular information through the year about their children's progress and annual reports are presented in a common format. This information gives a fair representation of pupils' current level of attainment and progress and indicates how improvement might be made. In the end-of-year reports, however, the mixture of information on curricular content, learning objectives and written comments on progress is confusing. Overall, the written comments in reports are insufficiently detailed and lack precise examples of what pupils have achieved and how they might improve. Statutory requirements are not fully met because the reports still do not include ICT in Years 7-10: poor progress has been made on this weakness identified four years ago.

74. Pupils' Records of Achievement, marking the end of compulsory education, are satisfactory. They contain a clear picture of pupils' broad achievements, especially in the upper school, as well as final levels of attainment and pupils' personal evaluations. Assessment provision and practice are good for those pupils identified by the school as having a degree of special educational need.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

75. The school has effective links with parents, who hold it in high regard. Parents are generally very pleased with the progress of their children, the quality of teaching and the standards that the school promotes in all aspects of its work. They are also very happy with the way that the school encourages and fosters the all-round development of their children. Only information about pupils' progress and the closeness of links with parents were regarded unfavourably by about one fifth of parents on the pre-inspection questionnaire.

76. The school displays a caring and welcoming atmosphere for pupils and parents. Parents indicate that they find staff very approachable and helpful. The school has recently appointed a full-time receptionist and this ensures that calls and enquiries from parents are handled professionally. Because some of the contributory primary schools and parishes are a significant distance from the school, the induction of Year 7 pupils to the school is very important: this is carefully planned and supervised. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in reviews of their children's progress.

77. The school's prospectus provides a good range of information to parents about the aims and activities of the school. It is regularly updated, clear and comprehensive. The GCSE options booklet and information about the sixth form are also well presented and informative. In contrast, the curricular information given for Year 7 is sketchy and not further extended for parents in written form during their children's time in Years 7-9. The *Planner*, which contains the home-school agreement and a calendar of events, supplies further details of activities, homework and pupils' progress. Parents' consultation evenings are very well attended. In addition, the school organises a few other meetings and days of recollection to consult and reflect with both parents and pupils.

78. Formal reports to parents are written to a common format. This consistency is helpful, but many reports do not give sufficient detail about pupils' attainment and progress. In addition, the printed text of the reports is, in some cases, confusing and vague. Parents are involved in the work of the school by, for example, arranging placements for work experience and helping with school trips and games. There is good evidence in the *Planner* that many parents support their children's learning in school by the careful monitoring of homework and by, for instance, making computers available at home for obtaining information and completing tasks.

79. Information about the activities and achievements of the school and associated matters is communicated to parents very regularly through a detailed weekly newsletter. In addition, there is a comprehensive quarterly newsletter that is well prepared and regarded by parents as full of interest. The Parents' Association provides a further link between parents and the school, but receives only a modest

level of support. Parents appreciate the comprehensive range of extracurricular activities provided for their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The school has a very clear set of aims that closely reflect its community and its Catholic ethos. The successful realisation of these aims and values is evident throughout the work of the school, including leadership at all levels. The influence of these values is a positive force in providing effective learning and high standards of achievement.

81. The school has been actively involved in a process of major change, innovation and improvement over the past two to three years. This has called for decisive leadership and rapid decision-making that has successfully addressed most of the necessary changes. A consequence of this is that some staff have not always felt fully consulted or committed to the pace and direction of change. Current changes in the pattern and organisation of senior management are designed to improve the quality of communication and consultation.

82. The headteacher provides vigorous leadership, based on a clear-sighted vision of the school's future. He identifies key issues with clarity and acts with appropriate determination and energy to achieve key priorities. He works very effectively with the deputy headteacher in a partnership that has put in place many sound systems for facilitating the necessary programme of change on which the school is embarked.

83. The senior management team has recently revised job descriptions, through which its members assume line-management responsibility for the next tier of managers, including the leaders of subject areas. The effectiveness of this arrangement has proved variable to date, because the system lacks a clear set of expectations and criteria by which this accountability can be discharged and monitored. The effectiveness of subject and pastoral team leaders ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, but is good overall.

84. The school's leadership has shown a clear capacity to improve the work and achievements of the school. This is exemplified not only in the major restructuring of the curriculum, but also by the incorporation of such significant initiatives as Sports College status, the *Excellence in Cities* projects for gifted and talented pupils and the pupil-mentoring scheme. These innovations are well managed. They add value to the school's work and help to raise overall standards.

85. The governing body plays an important supporting role in the life of the school. Its work is structured through a range of appropriate committees. It offers day-to-day monitoring and support to the school. It does not, however, take a sufficiently strategic view of the school's future needs. It does not have in place, for example, robust policies on the monitoring and evaluation of standards, on setting targets for the school's development or on ensuring value for money in relation to the school's work. It has not ensured that the full National Curriculum is provided in ICT.

86. A limited amount of direct monitoring and evaluation of teaching is under way, but is not systematically and comprehensively applied. The senior management team has produced a draft policy, as required by regulations, for a system of performance management; this is still under consideration. The school's system of appraisal is currently in abeyance.

87. The school's development plan is a good document. It is clearly expressed and covers explicit and relevant areas of priority. It is soundly costed and phased, but is not fully aligned with the school's financial and budget plans. It identifies suitable criteria by which the school can judge its success. It is matched by corresponding development plans for the separate subjects and other elements of the school. It is a good working tool.

88. The school's educational priorities are well supported through sound financial management and planning. The governing body is well informed about the school's spending patterns and monitors

expenditure carefully, although it does not often take the initiative on financial issues. The school carries forward a small surplus to allow for contingencies. As at the time of the last inspection, there is effective financial control and administration. The last audit raised a number of minor accounting and recording issues. These have been satisfactorily dealt with. The recent appointment of a bursar has led to a further necessary tightening up of procedures within the school.

89. Spending by heads of departments is carefully monitored. The school has made appropriate use of funds for staff training and of other specific grants and funds. The impact of professional development is monitored. The school makes satisfactory use of such new technologies as e-mail and the Internet, but does not use electronic monitoring for tracking pupils' attendance. The school takes best value into account when purchasing services: the issue of the best provider for school meals, for example, has been discussed at length by the governors and the purchase of furniture for the new buildings was carefully negotiated to obtain good value for money. The proportion of the school's income spent on the sixth form is lower than the income the sixth form generates.

90. The proportion of the school's budget spent on teaching staff has been above average, but is scheduled to fall in the current financial year to a broadly average level. The provision of teaching staff is generally good. There is, however, an imbalance in the staffing for design and technology - too much for resistant materials and too little for a broad programme in food and textiles, so restricting the range of experiences pupils have. Almost all lessons in the school are taught by specialists. There are sufficient appropriately qualified or trained staff for pupils with special educational needs. Technical support is insufficient in art and in design and technology. There is sufficient administrative support. The ratio of pupils to teachers is broadly average. The total teaching time of 25 hours per week is in line with that recommended nationally.

91. There is an effective programme of induction to the work of the school for teachers new to teaching. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are used appropriately. The good overall standard of teaching and learning in the school indicates that the school is capable of being an effective provider of initial teacher training.

92. The school has undergone a major building programme since the time of the last inspection. This has resulted in considerable improvement in the amount and quality of accommodation for science, art, design and technology, ICT, music, drama and the sixth form, all of which were identified at the last inspection as having poor accommodation. There is, however, still some unsatisfactory accommodation in science, where the old laboratories are of poor quality. The PE changing rooms are too small and of poor quality. The base for pupils with special educational needs is too small, but valued by pupils as a sanctuary. The library is an attractive room, but is too small for a school of this size and type. It is, however, larger than at the time of the last inspection. Access to any of the upper floors of the school is extremely difficult for people with physical disabilities, although there is access to parts of the ground floor. The school has toilet provision for disabled people.

93. The spending on learning resources is well above the national average. The provision of resources is good overall. There is, however, no equipment for computer-assisted design (CAD) in design and technology or for audio-visual work in art. The provision of resources for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The centrally provided ICT facilities have been improved since the time of the last inspection and are now good. The provision of ICT in departments is now generally satisfactory, but is unsatisfactory in English, geography, history and music.

94. The library provision is not good enough for pupils, especially those in the sixth form, to work independently. Although the number and range of books have improved since the last inspection, the stock of books is still too small (the result of the small size of the room) and some are out-of-date. There are eight industry-standard PCs in the library, with access to the Internet, but pupils cannot save work done on these machines on to their own disks. The CD-ROM server in the library is not operational and, as a result, the stock of CD-ROMs is not being used. Two quality newspapers and a small range of periodicals are available in the library.

95. Overall, taking into account the good quality and range of education provided for pupils, the good quality of teaching and the satisfactory progress that pupils make as they move through Years 7-11, set against the below average amount of money the school receives for its work, the school gives good value for money.

THE SIXTH FORM

96. The overall attainment of pupils in the sixth form is in line with the national average and the requirements of courses. Performance in the GCSE A-level examinations in 2000 was slightly below average, whereas results had been at least average (and in some years higher) in previous years. Achievement in vocational subjects (GNVQ) in 2000 and previous years has usually been broadly average.

97. The overall quality of sixth-form teaching is good and about a third of it is very good. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in well-prepared and thoughtfully structured lessons. The atmosphere in classes is friendly and encouraging. In the significant minority of lessons dominated by teachers' exposition, however, pupils have few opportunities to explore topics in depth for themselves, to develop the skills of research and analysis, or to be challenged to reach higher targets. In vocational courses pupils are encouraged to learn systematically and to apply their knowledge to real situations. The monitoring of pupils' performance is generally systematic and feedback in class is supportive.

98. Pupils respond positively to lessons in the main, concentrate on their work, and respond orally and in written work at a level appropriate to the courses they are following. The highest-attaining pupils contribute articulate ideas and questions in class and discuss the content of their subjects clearly and in detail. Written work is in many cases clearly presented and shows a mature approach to sixth-form work. In a minority of cases there are elementary spelling and grammatical errors that are not always corrected.

99. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided at GCE AS-level and A2-level. Nineteen AS/A subjects (including two mathematics courses) were running at the time of the inspection. A small number of these courses are also run at AS-level. There is no direct opportunity to follow a technology course in the sixth form. A wide choice is, however, available in the area of business: there are viable groups in economics and in government and politics as well as in advanced vocational education (AVE) in business.

100. Other vocational programmes are offered at GNVQ Intermediate or Advanced levels in health and social care, leisure and recreation, leisure and tourism, and in information technology. Religious education forms part of the school's compulsory core provision. The general PE provision is used by about three-fifths of pupils. Timetabled provision for general studies in Year 13 is no longer effectively in place, a serious weakness. Key Skills are not integrated into the overall timetable for sixth formers.

101. Provision for personal and career development and guidance is made periodically by suspending the normal timetable. The poor quality and frequency of higher education guidance is partly redeemed by the personal efforts and initiative of some tutors. The local careers service supports those seeking employment. Pupils in leisure and recreation follow an integrated guidance unit in GNVQ and all Intermediate and AVE pupils undertake work experience.

102. The time available for registration and tutorials is very limited. The school is aware of the need to increase both time and expertise in this area, particularly to enhance systems for monitoring individual pupils' overall performance against agreed targets. Annual written feedback of sound quality is provided for parents and there are regular parents' consultation evenings.

103. The prefect system provides experience of assuming responsibility. Pupils willingly undertake roles in the supervision and support of younger pupils, including a "shepherding" system for Year 7 pupils on entry to the school. Systems for other voluntary work, inside and outside the school, are being developed. Revisions to the systems for induction to Year 12 and for the monitoring and management of sixth formers are also being put in place. Some opportunities exist for visits to higher education and for other educational visits in this country and elsewhere in Europe.

104. Recent extensions and improvements to the school have provided the sixth form with new social, private-study and ICT facilities. Resources that accrue to the school for sixth-form provision are deployed appropriately for the numbers (254) currently remaining in school beyond sixteen: sixth-form provision is not subsidised by other parts of the school's work. The overall organisation of vocational subjects is satisfactory: there are well-developed schemes of work and sound policies and practice for monitoring pupils' progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

105. To improve and build upon the good quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:

- (a) implement effectively across all departments the school's policy for literacy, so that:
- appropriately high importance is given to pupils' rigorous discussion of what they are taught, in order to deepen their understanding and increase their initiative in learning;
 - standards of spelling and punctuation are improved and brought up to the above average quality of other aspects of pupils' writing (## 17 21 34 37 40 51 97-98 122).
- (b) remedy the weaknesses in teaching, management or provision of resources in art, in design and technology and in information and communication technology (ICT), as indicated in the main body of the report; and
- ensure that statutory requirements are met by:
- all pupils having sufficient experience in the use of ICT in both key stages; and
 - reports to parents of pupils in Years 7-10 including a report on ICT.
- The serious weaknesses in ICT were also highlighted at the last inspection in 1996 (## 46-48 70 90 92-93 and in the relevant subject reports).
- (c) ensure that all managers monitor all aspects of the school's work to a high standard, so that all policies operate effectively and consistently across the school (## 15 30-31 83 85-86 103).
- (d) remedy the deficiencies in the school's provision for pupils' welfare and guidance by
- ensuring that all key pastoral staff have the facilities to carry out their duties effectively;
 - providing a timetabled programme of personal, social and health education, including careers guidance, in Years 10-13;
 - improving the guidance that sixth formers receive about higher education;
 - ensuring that formal policies for matters of health and safety and for child protection are well disseminated, understood and implemented (## 47 53 66-68 101-102).

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 22 28 35 37 39 41 50 54 60 62 64 73 77-78 87 92 94 100 and in subject paragraphs.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	220
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	103

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	26	45	24	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

	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1100
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	27

Special educational needs

	Y7–Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	102

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	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	35

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence in 1998-1999.

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	74	101	175

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	65 (71)	64 (69)	61 (61)
	Girls	96 (77)	89 (71)	85 (67)
	Total	161 (148)	153 (140)	146 (128)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	92 (94)	87 (89)	83 (82)
	National	63 (64)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	66 (66)	74 (73)	55 (42)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70 (69)	67 (69)	67 (61)
	Girls	100 (79)	89 (71)	89 (67)
	Total	170 (148)	156 (140)	156 (128)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (94)	89 (89)	89 (82)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	67 (62)	75 (75)	61 (43)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1999.

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	80	99	179

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	50 (60)	75 (82)	78 (86)
	Girls	77 (68)	96 (85)	99 (86)
	Total	127 (128)	171 (167)	177 (172)
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	71 (73)	94 (95)	99 (98)
	National	49 (47)	89 (91)	94 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to 1999.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46.9 (48.2)
	National	38.7 (38.0)

Figures in brackets refer to 1999.

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	39	43	82

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	13.4 (16.4)	20.6 (22.2)	17.3 (19.4)	3.0 (4.7)	5.0 (4.4)	3.7 (4.5)
National	n/a (17.7)	n/a (18.1)	18.5 (17.9)	n/a (2.7)	n/a (2.8)	n/a (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to 1999.

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	Advanc'd – 17	65 (100)
		Intermed. – 9	78 (75)
	National – Intermed. Level		83 (73)

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1090
Any other minority ethnic group	5

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	13	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 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	66.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5
Average class size (YY7-11)	22.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	433

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	2,553,075
Total expenditure	2,510,902
Expenditure per pupil	2,313
Balance brought forward from previous year	-22,440
Balance carried forward to next year	19,733

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1100
Number of questionnaires returned	354

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	50	4	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	46	47	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	51	9	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	66	14	1	2
The teaching is good.	41	51	2	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	45	20	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	43	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	33	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	55	17	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	43	49	1	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	41	3	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	49	12	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on 46 of the questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points made by parents about the school were:

- the school's high expectations of pupils' effort, progress and achievement;
- the high quality of most of the teaching; and
- the school's pastoral support and caring ethos.

Amongst the few concerns expressed by a minority of parents were:

- the recent decline in GCE Advanced level results;
- the school's patchy provision for information and communication technology; and
- the view that the links between the school and parents could be closer.

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

ENGLISH

106. On entry to the school in Year 7 pupils' overall standard of attainment is well above the national average. Results in the national tests in English at the end of Year 9 over the period 1997-2000 were well above the national average. During the same period the overall attainment of both boys and girls was well above both the national standard and that usually reached by pupils in similar kinds of schools.

107. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' overall standard is well above average. Almost all pupils read aloud fluently and regularly use inference and deduction when reading. Pupils in Year 7 have a deep understanding of the relationships between characters in novels as, for example, in Nina Bawden's *The Outside Child* through the use of a variety of techniques in drama work. Pupils in Year 8, reading Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *In Mrs. Tilscher's Class*, considered thoughtfully why the classroom "was better than home". In a Year 8 class pupils in a poetry lesson structured the writing of their own poems well through the helpful guidance of the teacher.

108. Boys and girls listen attentively and have the skill to select evidence from their reading to support their answers. Pupils write for a suitable variety of purposes, including responding thoughtfully to texts such as *Treasure Island*, *Oliver Twist* and *Stone Cold*. A majority of pupils express themselves clearly, demonstrating a sound knowledge of grammar and spelling. The handwriting and spelling of a minority of pupils, however, are poor.

109. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress in their studies in Years 7-9. For example, they become proficient at highlighting the language used in texts to describe the feelings of a character. Oral discussion is regularly used to help pupils to reflect more deeply on what they read and to consider how writers create effects through their use of language. Pupils discussed, for instance, whether David Copperfield learned effectively with Mr. Murdstone and at the same time considered the characteristics of Dickens's use of English. In a lower set studying Shakespeare's *Macbeth* pupils understood the meaning of text such as "What beast was't then / That made you break this enterprise to me? ". Most pupils improve the planning and organisation of their writing and make good use of textual references to support their ideas.

110. Over the 1997-2000 period the GCSE results in both English Language and English Literature were well above the national average for both points scores and the proportion of pupils gaining a grade in the A*-C range. They were also well above the group average for similar kinds of schools. Throughout this period girls' attainment was higher than that of boys, although the attainment of boys improved noticeably throughout the 1997-1999 period before dropping back a little in 2000.

111. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils' overall level of attainment is well above average. In lessons in Years 10 and 11 pupils use textual references with insight to inform their understanding of literature. Most pupils are keen to discuss their reading. They write succinctly and effectively on a range of literary texts such as Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. They also respond well to media material. When considering the effect of language in Vernon Scannell's poem, *Nettles*, for instance, pupils commented perceptively on such phrases as "tall recruits" and the significance of the last line, "My son would often feel sharp wounds again". The extended writing of able pupils is of a high standard and shows maturity and sensitivity of style.

112. In Key Stage 4 pupils demonstrate reading skills of a high order in the inferences and deductions they make from literary texts. Their knowledge and understanding of literature are extensive; high-attaining pupils write polished essays of literary criticism. Written work is generally fluent and technically accurate, although the spelling and handwriting of a minority of pupils is not as good as it should be.

113. Pupils make good progress in their work in Years 10 and 11 and more able pupils produce perceptive and mature writing. They make sound progress in using their writing skills and most express themselves fluently. They continue to enjoy reading: most reflect sensitively upon what they have read and express their thoughts well in oral discussions. Pupils with special educational needs as well as those with considerable talent make good progress through Years 7-11.

114. The overall standard of sixth-form work is good. At the end of the English Literature course pupils are well prepared for university work. Over the 1998-2000 period over half the pupils entered for A-level achieved a higher (A or B) grade. In literature sessions pupils display a very good knowledge and appreciation of literary texts and acquire a strong command of literary criticism in both their oral and written work. Year 12 pupils studying Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, for example, used textual evidence to consider how Malvolio had been "baited" and the qualities of his letter soliloquy. Alan Bennett's *A Chip in the Sugar* was discussed thoughtfully by Year 13 pupils as they considered Graham's lack of self-awareness. A Year 13 class drew well on their knowledge of Ibsen's play, *Ghosts*, to consider the characters of Oswald and Mrs. Alving, pulling out apposite textual references to understand why Oswald says of his mother "Well, at least I do know you."

115. Teaching is good overall in both Key Stages 3 and 4, but slightly stronger in the latter. Teachers in the department have a very good level of subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Most lessons are well planned and include clear learning objectives. In Key Stage 3, however, insufficient attention was given during the inspection to spelling and punctuation. Literature and non-literary texts are well taught and enable pupils to reflect with insight upon their structure and organisation.

116. Teachers demonstrate both an enthusiasm for their subject and a commitment to enable pupils to be successful. Whilst pupils take part satisfactorily in oral question and answer sessions and in discussion, the range of methods used to develop oral work is limited. Written work is regularly marked and most pupils receive supportive feedback to indicate ways in which their written work could be improved. Homework is set regularly and is used either to extend pupils' learning or to consolidate classwork: its use is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9, but good in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form.

117. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers' depth of literary knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject promote a high level of commitment from pupils. Lessons are carefully planned. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils and push literary enquiry along by shared insights into texts.

118. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They express an enjoyment for the subject and generally respond well to one another. They concentrate hard and, when given the opportunity, learn well in groups. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Boys and girls work well together.

119. The study of literature makes a very strong contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Pupils discussed sensitively, for example, the feelings of Jane in Nina Bawden's novel, *The Outside Child*, and the character of Mr. Watkins in Theresa Breslin's novel, *Whispers in the Graveyard*. The department organises a wide range of extracurricular activities. These include theatre visits, public speaking competitions, writers' workshops and poetry competitions.

120. The department is ably led and has effective procedures in place to track pupils' progress across Years 7-11 and into the sixth form. The department does not, however, have a thorough analysis of pupils' strengths and weaknesses on entry to the school. Documentation is generally good, but does not include a detailed scheme of work to secure continuity and progression in drama across Years 7-9. A small amount of monitoring of teaching takes place; a programme of twice-yearly observations is planned.

121. The department's development plan is a generally good planning tool, but does not take into sufficient account in Year 7 the impact of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the department reviews samples of work. There is, however, no systematic procedure to ensure that information derived from these samples is recorded for future reference. Effective deployment and use of ICT during the inspection was restricted by the rewiring of the classrooms. Accommodation, whilst sufficient, is drab and uninspiring, despite the extensive and attractive displays of pupils' work.

122. Literacy teaching across the school is broadly satisfactory, but has weaknesses. Reading is generally good. Pupils read aloud with accuracy and expression in, for example, geography and history. They are well able to extract ideas and, when appropriate, use inference. Written work is well presented in science and geography. Spelling and punctuation are not, however, as strong as they should be across the curriculum and a cross-curricular policy gives little guidance on the use of language in each subject. Lists of key words are displayed and used in some subjects to help accuracy in spelling, but overall insufficient attention is given to the recognition of phonemes in words.

123. **Drama** was introduced in the school in 1999 and has already demonstrated that it enables pupils to improve their confidence in expressing their ideas in performance through the use of dramatic techniques and strategies. It is incorporated within English teaching in Years 7-9. The quality of teaching is good in Years 10-13, resulting in high levels of attainment. Learning and attainment are very good and pupils in the sixth form are highly motivated to achieve high standards. Pupils in Year 13, in carrying out their group project, maintain a journal that records systematically the approaches they use. The school is fortunate in having a purpose-built centre for the performing arts. Drama is well planned in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

MATHEMATICS

124. The proportion of pupils who achieved either the basic standard or higher level expected of 14 year olds in the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 was well above average. Based upon the average points scored by all pupils, the school's results were well above the average for all schools as well as for that of schools in similar social circumstances. The results were of the same high standard in previous years. The overall attainment of boys and girls is similar, but boys' achievements were better than those of girls at the highest levels, contrary to the national trend.

125. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was well above average. About one fifth of pupils achieved the highest (A* or A) grades and about half (compared with the national average of a quarter) achieved grades A*-B. The overall attainment of boys and girls reveals no discernible difference, contrary to the national trend, but girls achieved more of the highest grades than boys. Over recent years the results have improved significantly. Based upon the average grade achieved by all the pupils in the school, pupils made significantly better progress in mathematics than in many of their other subjects.

126. Examination results at GCE A-level were good up to 1999: each year about half of the candidates achieved the highest (A or B) grades, compared with a national average of about a quarter. In 2000, however, because of insufficient monitoring of the quality of A-level teaching, the pass rate and progress were lower than usual and about half the candidates achieved the two lowest pass grades (D or E); very few achieved the highest grades. Teaching arrangements and monitoring have been improved to a good level for the current school year.

127. By the end of Key Stage 3 the standard of work of a larger than average proportion of pupils is well above that expected of 14 year olds. Good teaching helps them to think mathematically and to present their work in ways that are logically correct. These factors help pupils to achieve high standards in, for example, solving routine problems, manipulation of algebraic expressions and generalising about the patterns and relationships they find in extended investigations. Many pupils remember earlier work well. This factor enables them to begin new work with a minimum of review and to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject relatively quickly.

128. High-attaining pupils in the upper sets of Key Stage 3 generally make fast progress. It could sometimes be faster. Pupils often practise new skills and techniques in a given, challenging time or, because they demonstrate firm understanding, are not required to do unnecessary repetition but move on to more difficult tasks. For example, the top set in Year 9 readily recognised and described quick ways of expanding and simplifying expressions such as $(x + 2y)^2$, $(x - 2y)^2$ and $x^2 - y^2$ by completing only a few examples of each

without unnecessary repetition. Such strategies are not, however, used often enough in sets just below the top ones.

129. Low-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in Key Stage 3 over a broad range of the subject. For example, a group of 20 such pupils in Year 9, by skilful teaching and good classroom management, made predictions and explained their conclusions of a mathematical investigation. By practical means they generated data and analysed it by drawing the patterns that emerged. This led to much excited discussion of their generalisations that raised their interest and enjoyment of the subject.

130. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make good progress in response to the thorough teaching they receive. In each year, for example, they improve their skills in solving equations of increasing complexity, raise their knowledge and understanding of geometry and increase their methods of representing and interpreting data. Basic numeracy is a weakness among too many pupils, however, especially in Year 8. These deficiencies are being effectively improved. Pupils gain confidence by speeding up their ready recall of basic facts and improving their methods of mental calculation.

131. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is well above average. Almost all pupils are entered for GCSE and most prepare for the higher or intermediate tiers of the examination. The top set is entered for the higher tier at the end of Year 10 and most of them achieve grades A* or A. For the first time, this set (now in Year 11) is studying AS-level mathematics with a view to taking the examination in summer 2001.

132. The top set in Year 11 make very good progress in understanding abstract mathematical concepts in, for example, the differential calculus. In one such lesson, in response to excellent teaching, they deduced a general formula for finding the gradient of a tangent to the graph of a function by sharing their findings of a number of particular functions. By this process they gained a clear understanding of the concept of a "limiting value". Equally, pupils in sets 2 and 3 make very good progress through a programme of study pitched at the higher tier of GCSE. They quickly acquire such valuable mathematical skills as those of recognising patterns in sequences of numbers and expressing the general terms by algebraic formulae. Similarly sets 4 and 5 make good progress through a programme of study that prepares them for entry to the intermediate tier. The sets of lower attainers and those with special educational needs prepare for the foundation tier. In all these sets the learning is systematic and productive.

133. Pupils' progress in Year 10 is very good. Most pupils put commendable effort into their lessons and high attainers in particular are adept at developing their own methods of tackling problems. They work with impressive confidence and accuracy through standard textbook questions. They show good levels of insight into more complex problems - such as the conditions under which a quadratic equation has 0, 1 or 2 solutions when the equation arises from the intersection of a straight line with a parabola. Pupils in the other sets make good progress through a suitable range of mathematics and gain confidence in, for example, solving problems in everyday contexts, learning how to calculate the volumes of prisms and acquiring knowledge of geometry and trigonometry.

134. A very large number of pupils study the subject at GCE A-level and a few take the course in further mathematics. In response to thorough and rigorous teaching, pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding. Their attainment is usually well above average. The further mathematics group in Year 13, for example, displayed high levels of competence in solving first order differential equations containing the standard logarithmic, exponential, trigonometric and hyperbolic functions. Although some members of the group do not have a ready recall of all the relationships between these functions, all used them effectively in their solutions of such equations. They developed well their insight into the subtleties of the manipulation of such functions and produced elegant solutions. They are mathematicians in the making. In contrast, a large group of pupils in their first term of the A-level course developed tentatively the general terms of both arithmetic and geometric progressions from consideration of particular cases.

135. Throughout the school pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They respond positively to the good teaching they receive and are very cooperative in undertaking the tasks set for them. Much of

the good teaching enables many pupils to develop confidence and independence in their learning and consequently they persevere well when they encounter difficulties. Equally, they are willing to ask teachers for help.

136. Many pupils willingly offer oral answers to questions and respond well to teachers' requests to clarify or extend their ideas. In contrast, a significant minority are tentative on such occasions, but respond well to encouragement. Pupils work hard and productively at practising the standard skills and procedures. Most take pride in the logical presentation of written work that conveys clearly their methods of solutions to problems. A significant minority, however, reduce their work to a string of unexplained calculations that fail to convey their understanding, especially when their final answers are wrong.

137. A high proportion of pupils enter competitions organised by the Mathematical Association. Groups of pupils in Year 10 are annually teamed with pupils from Ampleforth College in the Independent-State Schools Link, in which they jointly develop mathematical investigations. Success in such activities further enhances pupils' attitudes and interest in the subject.

138. The behaviour of pupils is very good. Classrooms are orderly and calm. Pupils respect their teachers and respond positively to the occasional admonition. Most pupils form constructive relationships with their peers and their teachers, and enjoy humour. They frequently help one another to clarify misunderstandings.

139. Teaching is good overall. Overall, teaching in half the lessons is good and, additionally, very good in two-fifths, including a little that is excellent. The good teaching identified in the last inspection report has been further improved. Teachers are very well qualified and have a good range of experience. Their very good subject knowledge and generally high expectations of what pupils can do ensure that lessons are well planned with clear objectives and lead to thorough and challenging teaching. Occasionally, however, a few opportunities to challenge the highest attainers still further are missed by failing to give a little extra "twist" to the questions to extend the learning yet more.

140. A very good range of teaching methods is employed. Clear explanations and well managed discussions are a strong feature of many lessons. In these discussions very good questioning makes pupils think things out for themselves and requires them to explain their ideas. Consequently, pupils become independent thinkers and understand subject content more firmly. These factors are particularly evident in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and, together with pupils' very good attitudes, are the main reasons why examination results are usually high.

141. A further feature of the very good teaching is the alternation of short bursts of teaching, containing well-posed questions and discussions to clarify ideas, with tasks to be completed in a given time. This is effective in enabling pupils to make fast progress. For example, a large group of A-level pupils in Year 13 made good progress in solving a range of mechanics problems by completing the problems independently after a short discussion of their ideas. Occasionally, however, teachers tell pupils too much and make them passive learners.

142. Pupils practise skills and techniques thoroughly and are taught carefully how to use them to tackle problems in everyday settings. Practical work is used effectively to help pupils to understand new ideas. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate mathematical problems that require them to decide upon lines of enquiry, justify their thinking and hypotheses and to reach general conclusions from their working. The majority of pupils show insight and tenacity in pursuit of more extended investigations. Gifted and talented pupils combine creativity with rigour to produce work of very high quality. This is especially evident in the link with Ampleforth College and, to a lesser degree, in the "master classes" held for about 30 pupils in Year 6 from local Catholic primary schools.

143. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and ensure a calm climate for learning. Pupils' behaviour is well managed, usually by well-targeted questions. The pace and progress in lessons are good, but could be raised further in a few classes by, for example, giving pupils tasks to do in a specified time. Resources are generally used well, but the use of computers is too limited to be effective

in enhancing pupils' learning. This weakness was also identified in the last inspection. In contrast, graphic calculators are used well in the sixth form in statistics, for instance, and by pupils in Year 9.

144. During lessons teachers make good, ongoing assessments of pupils' understanding; many misunderstandings are quickly clarified with individual pupils. Formal written assessments are made with sufficient regularity. Pupils' work is marked frequently and both attainment and progress are assessed. Brief encouraging or challenging comments are often added. Homework is set regularly and tackled successfully. The department is very well managed and organised and is enthusiastically led. Morale is high and teachers have the interest and commitment to continue to develop and improve their teaching of the subject.

145. The general standard of numeracy is good. Too many pupils in Key Stage 3, however, lack a ready recall of basic number facts and their mental methods of calculation are slow and inaccurate. Steps are being taken to implement the national initiative for improving numeracy in Key Stage 3 and this is beginning to raise further pupils' confidence and accuracy in mental arithmetic. It also alleviates some pupils' over-reliance on calculators.

146. Overall, pupils' numeracy is good enough to support well their learning in other subjects. They use calculators sensibly in mathematics lessons and in other subjects, especially in science and in design and technology. In these subjects they also estimate, approximate and measure quantities to appropriate degrees of accuracy. Their knowledge of algebra is sufficient to handle the formulae used in science and geography. Pupils represent data by appropriate graphs. They interpret well the conclusions that may be drawn from such graphs in science, geography, history and economics. Pupils are adept at recognising relationships between the variables, where they exist, in science and in design and technology. Knowledge of common shapes and their properties supports well their work in art and in design and technology.

SCIENCE

147. Pupils' overall attainment is well above that achieved nationally by pupils at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils' attainment in the three sciences in the sixth form is generally above the national average.

148. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 the percentages of pupils reaching the basic expected level or higher levels were well above both the national average and the average of similar schools. Boys and girls performed equally well. The results were much the same as in 1999. Since the last inspection standards have steadily improved, generally following the national trend, but at a level consistently well above the national average.

149. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 4 are entered for the double award in science. In the GCSE examinations in 2000, the percentage of pupils achieving grades in the range A*-C was well above the national average, but was considerably lower than for 1999; only four pupils gained the highest A* grade. High-attaining pupils are entered for the three separate sciences at GCSE: the results in the examinations in 2000 were well above the national averages in each subject, but slightly lower than in 1999. The percentage of pupils gaining the highest A* or A grades was also lower in 2000, especially in chemistry. Over recent years the proportion of pupils achieving these high grades has been well above the national average.

150. Courses in all three sciences are offered in the sixth form. The results in the A-level examinations in 2000 were above the national averages in chemistry and physics, but below that in biology. Over recent years the results at A-level in all three sciences have been consistently above national averages.

151. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment in their written work and in the lessons observed was above average overall. Higher-attaining pupils consistently produce work of a high standard as a result of teachers' high expectations in their planning of lessons, through the opportunities available for them to

extend their knowledge and understanding in homework exercises and through participation in extracurricular activities in science. They demonstrate high interest and have good understanding of the topics covered. By the end of Year 9 they have particularly good knowledge of chemical reactions. They recognise the differing reactivities of the alkali metals and are familiar with the use of chemical symbols, formulae and equations. They are confident in constructing electrical circuits and understand how electromagnets are made and used. Their knowledge of the basic structures and classifications of plants and animals is good.

152. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are given good support and encouragement by teachers. They benefit from suitably modified tasks to achieve well by the end of Key Stage 3 and to reach satisfactory standards. They are less confident, however, in recalling and applying information. They respond well to carefully structured lessons to develop their learning. For example, a lower set in Year 9 watched a video and then successfully tackled an appropriately challenging worksheet on the differences between physical and chemical change and the uses of metals. Pupils of all levels of attainment have good practical skills, but have limited opportunities to plan and carry out investigations.

153. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils generally achieve standards in the various courses that are broadly in line with their prior attainment. Pupils in the higher sets have very good understanding of their work in all three sciences. Their knowledge of genetics and genetically inherited diseases is particularly good, and they appreciate the moral and social issues linked to genetic engineering. Pupils are well able to apply the kinetic model of chemical reactions to explain reaction rates and equilibrium. They have very good knowledge of astronomy and compare, in an informed way, the two major theories about the origin of the universe.

154. Pupils in double-award sets have good knowledge, for example, of atomic structure and chemical bonding. They understand how selective breeding is used to produce new varieties of plants and animals, and how current and resistance vary in electrical circuits. Pupils in lower sets handle fossils satisfactorily and recognise how evolution has worked. They understand how viruses and bacteria cause diseases and of the body's defence systems against disease. All pupils carry out scientific investigations in Years 10 and 11, but the quality of work produced does not match the level of their other work. In particular, they do not link their predictions or analysis of results adequately to appropriate theories. The presentation of their results in graphical forms is relatively weak.

155. Pupils in the sixth form are very mature in their approach to their studies. Their level of attainment is usually in line with their abilities, earlier attainment and course requirements. They use notes from lessons, supplemented by material researched from other sources, to develop good quality notes that reflect mature standards. Their practical skills are good and they enjoy discussing aspects of their work.

156. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are good. They are good listeners, respond well to questions and readily express ideas. They settle quickly to the set tasks and maintain good concentration and work-rate. Pupils cooperate very well in group work, sharing the tasks and exchanging ideas. They show respect for equipment, observe laboratory routines and are well aware of safe working practices. The behaviour of a very small minority of boys in Key Stage 4, who showed little inclination to complete the set tasks to time, was the only blemish on the otherwise good behaviour of pupils in lessons.

157. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was good in half of the lessons observed and very good in a quarter of them. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have good (and usually very good) subject knowledge which they use well in planning lessons to meet the needs of all pupils. Clear learning objectives are generally identified for lessons, but are not often shared with pupils. Occasionally objectives are imprecisely defined, leading to a lack of clarity in the structure of lessons.

158. Teachers use questions very well to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They generally maintain good pace in lessons. Pupils in Year 11, for example, responded well to a series of rapid questions that revised previous work on the digestive system and then proceeded to develop well their ideas on the role of enzymes in digestion. In lessons and for homework exercises pupils are set

challenging tasks appropriate to their ability. Pupils in Year 8, for example, were asked to research other applications of electromagnets, after learning in the lesson about their use in the electric bell, car starter motors and security locks. Teachers plan well for the needs of lower-attaining pupils. Pupils in a lower set in Year 11, for instance, benefited from a good balance of questions, discussions interspersed with written work and reading from a textbook to develop ideas on the asexual reproduction of plants.

159. Teachers set homework regularly and use it well to reinforce and extend work done in lessons. Pupils' written work is generally of a good (often very good) standard and well presented. Marking is regular and thorough, although the misspellings of even key words are inconsistently corrected. Teachers make supportive comments and indications of how work could be improved. Opportunities for extended or creative written work are limited. Pupils in Year 7, however, demonstrated good imagination and focus on the scientific facts in reporting their impressions of Earth as a visitor from a planet with longer days and years.

160. Since the last inspection the department has implemented thorough and integrated procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. The data obtained, together with information from national tests, are well collated and used to set realistic but challenging targets for pupils and the whole department. Teachers do not, however, make the best use of all this information in their annual reports to parents. Comments in reports are often of a very general nature and do not give a clear indication of how well pupils are meeting their targets.

161. The department is very well led. The new head of department has a clear vision of what needs to be done to raise standards still further: some strategies have already been put in place to achieve the goals set in the department's development plan. Since the last inspection the department has made good progress. New schemes of work meet the latest National Curriculum requirements and revised assessment procedures provide a much clearer view of individual pupils' progress and of the department's performance as a whole.

162. The department organises a wide range of extracurricular opportunities for pupils. These include an astronomy club; a robot design and building club that is working towards participating in television programmes; plant propagation research for the Haworthia Society; and sixth-form engineering projects with local industries.

163. The provision of a new laboratory and the conversion of a classroom to provide basic facilities for practical work have reduced the number of lessons taught outside laboratories. The new laboratory provides excellent facilities, but the older laboratories are in need of refurbishment. Equipment and resources are adequate and are well stored. Technical staff efficiently provide the materials needed for lessons. The use of ICT is satisfactory, within the limited facilities available. Neither the development of pupils' skills in this aspect nor the promotion of investigative skills are closely integrated into the schemes of work. This is necessary to raise the standards of work further in Years 7-11. The range and quality of books in the library are insufficient to provide suitable research material for pupils. Overall, this is a strong department that provides a good standard of education for pupils.

ART

164. Over the period 1998-2000 the proportion of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C in GCSE was well below the national average; that of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-G was broadly average. More girls than boys achieved the higher grades. Few pupils achieve the highest grades. Pupils' performance in the subject in 2000 (and in the previous four years) was significantly below what they achieved in most of their other subjects.

165. In the sixth form, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher (A-B) grades or passing the subject at GCE A-level over the period 1998-2000 was above the national average, except in 1999 where the proportion gaining grades A-B was broadly average.

166. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment is average overall. Pupils have better practical skills than knowledge and understanding of art materials or the work of other artists. Many pupils draw well from observation (as, for example, in their plant studies, using coloured pencil) and refine and abstract ideas soundly. Their homework research on artists, using computers or books, is satisfactory, but electronic technology (ICT) does not form a significant part of their creative or aesthetic thinking within art lessons. Sketchbooks are used well for research, but are underused as journals to provide a record of all that they have learned. Pupils' speaking and listening are above average, although they have limited opportunities for discussion. Reading and writing about the subject are more limited than normally found at this age.

167. By the age of 16, pupils' attainment is slightly above average. The highest standards are achieved in drawing. In contrast, painting and printmaking with three-dimensional studies are of a lower standard than normally seen by this stage. Good standards are to be seen in pupils' "carnival", architectural and still-life studies. Line, colour, texture and composition are all strong features of this work. There is little indication that pupils use ICT other than for research purposes. Few pupils understand the importance of sketchbooks as a tool for solving problems and many of them do not have them available in lessons. The majority of pupils have good listening and speaking skills, but are given few opportunities for discussion. Opportunities for reading and writing are fewer than normal.

168. By the age of 18, pupils' attainment is above average. Talented pupils achieve well above average knowledge, skills and understanding as well as having a very clear view of how art links with such other subjects as mathematics and science. Drawing, painting and applied art (as, for example, in three-dimensional or textile studies) are of a good standard. The work of some individuals is very good. Large-scale figurative and abstract paintings are strong features. Pupils are very good listeners and competent speakers, but have few opportunities to discuss ideas with their peers and take part in critical discourse. Students access the Internet, but do not use computers as a creative tool for art. The pupils who attend life-drawing classes benefit enormously from this experience: their increased understanding of the human form results in their increasingly bold interpretations, using a variety of materials.

169. The quality of teaching is at least broadly satisfactory, but has weak features; in just over half of the lessons seen it was good (and occasionally very good). Teaching is satisfactory overall in Years 7 and good in Years 10-13. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding, with particular strengths in computer-graphics, silk-screen printing and decorative textiles. They are enthusiastic for the subject and have good working relationships with learning support assistants. They know their pupils well and care for them.

170. Teachers track pupils' progress and keep satisfactory ongoing records. They miss opportunities, however, to use pupils' sketchbooks for assessment purposes (for example) or to use assessment for planning and to enhance pupils' learning. They use a narrow range of teaching approaches, especially in Key Stage 3. As a result, they restrict pupils' literacy and the range of ways that they could learn: pupils have few opportunities, for instance, for reading, writing or discussion about art. Whilst teachers recognise the need to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of art and artists, a lack of audio-visual and computer equipment within the department and limited access to central ICT rooms, during the period of rebuilding, have contributed to slow progress in implementing the requirements for Curriculum 2000.

171. Pupils enter the school at the age of 11 with a very mixed range of experiences in the subject and the department has no baseline assessment of pupils' attainment against which to judge progress. In Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress in the traditional areas of painting and drawing and satisfactory progress in ceramics. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The lack of displays of key words to guide spelling or to reinforce what has been said by the teacher often limits pupils' understanding. In Year 10 good progress is made in work on natural forms, using screen-printing on fabric.

172. Talented pupils and those in the sixth form make good progress overall and very good progress in practical activities. The lack of artistic enrichment through such means as visits to art galleries or from

practising artists places a ceiling on learning at GCSE level in particular. Sixth formers benefit from having their own workspaces, although they have limited opportunity for extended work at any one time.

173. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are usually good. They are very good in the sixth form. Pupils generally support one another very well within lessons. In groups composed largely of lower-attaining boys, however, unsatisfactory behaviour impeded both teaching and learning. There is too much chatter in many lessons. This slows progress.

174. The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory overall. They have been very effective in providing a caring and secure working environment and in ensuring that good standards are reached by many pupils in the traditional areas of painting and drawing. They have, however, been ineffective in raising the standards achieved at GCSE or the profile of the subject within the school.

175. Displays of pupils' work are good and stimulating both within art areas and in the main school. The new art rooms offer improved facilities, but have such deficiencies as the lack of a working extraction system for the kiln that poses a risk to health and safety. Constraints of timetabling (all single lessons) and some lack of resources (including technical help for clay work in particular) have partly contributed to a lack of progress in improving standards since the last inspection. The quality of learning in many lessons in Years 7-9, however, remains modest. Assessment procedures have shown some improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

176. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' overall level of attainment is above average: almost all achieve the expected level of attainment for their age and a minority achieve more. In the 2000 National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9 the proportion of pupils judged to be achieving at least Level 5 was well above the national average. Boys achieved similarly to girls at this level. There was an improvement in the proportion of pupils (especially of boys) achieving at least the basic Level 5 in 2000 compared to 1999, but noticeably fewer pupils reached at least Level 6.

177. In 2000 teachers assessed that a much lower proportion of pupils achieved Level 6 or higher in this subject than in nearly all their other subjects. Pupils' attainment was also below the typical performance of pupils in other schools. Underachievement is linked to the lack of sufficient opportunity for pupils to acquire higher-level skills in lessons. Deficiencies in the accommodation that restricted the range and quality of work were highlighted at the 1996 inspection. Both restricted resources for learning and the disruption of teaching during recent building operations partly explain the lower standards at Level 6+ in 2000.

178. From the evidence of design work and practical projects pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is above average and reflects teachers' assessments in 2000. Pupils find and use a range of information sources to investigate problems such as dietary needs to create a new food product. They work with a variety of tools, materials and equipment and show that they understand their working characteristics - as, for example, electronic components to design and construct an electronic moisture tester or suitable packaging for a cosmetic product. Higher-attaining pupils critically evaluate their work at each stage and identify suitable improvements. Most pupils have competent basic skills in ICT and use these to improve the presentation of their work.

179. Pupils read well and explain their ideas clearly, using accurate technical explanations. Standards of written work are generally average, although there are weaknesses in handwriting, spelling and punctuation. More able pupils are encouraged to work at a level appropriate to their ability by extension tasks that ensure an aspect of the subject is covered in greater depth or breadth. Pupils have insufficient experience in computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and restricted opportunities in food technology. They have no experience of textiles after Year 7 because of an imbalance in staffing expertise within the department.

180. By the end of Key Stage 4 there is wide variation in pupils' performance, but it is above average overall. Not all pupils take the subject, because they have been formally "disapplied" and concentrate instead on a choice of three other subjects. Overall results in the GCSE short courses in food technology, graphics products and resistant materials (taken by almost all pupils in 2000) were above average, but were not as high as in 1999. Girls achieve consistently better results than boys in all courses. The most successful aspects were food technology and resistant materials. The slight deterioration in pupils' performance in 2000 compared to 1999, by the end of both key stages, is partly attributable to the constraints of resources over the two years.

181. Current work in the GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 in control systems, graphics products and resistant materials is above average overall. Pupils demonstrate high standards of practical competence and precision in the use of tools, equipment and techniques. Their mathematical skills are good. They measure, calculate and explain their findings well, showing good skills of analysis and of handling data. Written reports on projects are presented to a high standard, using ICT. The work of higher-attaining pupils shows systematic detail in planning projects and the incorporation of more complex sets of criteria, selecting options and evaluating them carefully - as, for example, when designing an automatic door control for a restaurant.

182. Pupils' attainment in the subject on entry to the school is above average. Over Key Stage 3 most pupils make satisfactory progress overall; they make good (occasionally very good) progress in over a third of lessons. Pupils develop their design skills, using research and ICT, apply them to a range of activities (as, for example, using graphics in product design) and enhance their competence in measuring and handling data. Pupils' understanding of basic electronics and of the working properties of materials develops quickly. They select and use appropriate tools and equipment competently to create their designs effectively and know how to work safely. In a lesson in Year 9, for example, pupils learnt about mechanisms to create different types of movement in a wooden pull-along toy. They made good progress by practising measuring to achieve improved accuracy and cut out the shape of the body for the toy using a template and a coping saw.

183. Pupils generally learn well, but overall progress in Key Stage 4 is unsatisfactory owing to the department's lack of facilities for computerised control work. The lower level of achievement in GCSE short courses in 2000, compared with 1999, was largely attributable to the limited provision over the two years. The needs of the most able pupils are not fully met.

184. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good throughout the school. Pupils come promptly to lessons, are well prepared and are keen to learn. They listen carefully and apply themselves to tasks with enthusiasm, seeking help when appropriate. Pupils persevere and take pride in their work and pay attention to detail. Although they discuss and review work regularly to improve their skills and understanding, they miss opportunities to jot down notes as they work, as a basis for subsequent written evaluation. They work well cooperatively and adopt a disciplined approach to practical problems, observing good health and safety practice.

185. The quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory, but is good overall throughout the school. In half of the lessons seen during the inspection teaching was good (and occasionally very good). Teachers know their subjects well and most have a clear understanding of pupils' abilities and the progress they make. Lessons are generally well planned and effectively taught to make the best use of the time available. In the very good lessons teachers set clearly focused and demanding tasks, asking challenging questions to stimulate and extend pupils' ability to use their knowledge.

186. In a small number of lessons in both key stages pupils were not sufficiently challenged by the nature of the task or the teacher's expectations. As a result, they rapidly lost enjoyment and enthusiasm for their work and made very little progress. Occasionally teaching is unsatisfactory because the teacher does not have either an adequate grasp of the overall nature of the subject or how to extend older and more able pupils. Teaching is less effective where equipment is restricted - as, for example, in two classes in Year 11 that have to share access to construction equipment.

187. Standards of marking are good, but insufficient use is made of assessment data to ensure consistent planning for high standards. The limited evidence of the last inspection suggests that the standard of teaching

found then is fairly similar to what it is now. Some sections of the department are insufficiently equipped for the breadth and depth of activities needed for the National Curriculum. Links to industry are insufficiently developed. Resources restrict teaching in CAD/CAM.

188. The department is generally managed satisfactorily. Schemes of work are regularly reviewed and updated. Limitations in the staffing time for food technology and textiles constrain the curriculum. The current structure of a "roundabout" system of teaching modules in Key Stage 3 impedes the continuity of teaching. GCSE subject options for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are restricted over the 2000-2002 period. No courses are offered in the sixth form.

189. The school has made satisfactory progress in improving its provision for the subject since the last inspection. The department makes efficient use of two new teaching rooms (one for electronics and control and the other for food technology) and some new resources. The other two rooms do not have the level of provision to meet the new demands of the subject. The location of accommodation necessitates travel between buildings during some lessons to use construction equipment. There is not enough secure storage of materials and for pupils' coursework. There is too little technical support, especially in food, leaving teachers to do the essential work of preparation and routine maintenance.

GEOGRAPHY

190. Pupils' overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is well above the national expectation. During the inspection pupils were working in Year 9 at an overall level above the national average. When teachers assessed pupils' work at the end of Year 9 in 2000, results indicated that pupils' attainment was well above the national average. The standard was distinctly higher than in the previous year. Girls achieved a higher overall level than boys.

192. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' overall level of attainment in GCSE is well above the national norm. Results in GCSE in 2000 were well above the national average, with girls achieving better results than boys at the higher (A*/A) levels. These results are similar to the high standards achieved also in 1999, when pupils' performance was above what they achieved in most other subjects in the school. Results have improved steadily since the last inspection. During the inspection pupils worked at an overall level above the national average.

193. GCE A-level results in 2000 were in line with the national average. This represents a decline on the grades achieved in the previous three years, when there had been a steady improvement in results to a point well above the national norm. The department reviews all examination results carefully each year, including a close analysis of the difference in the performance of boys and girls. Clear strategies have been implemented to raise pupils' attainment still further, with a particular emphasis on the standards achieved by boys.

194. Pupils have a good knowledge of the subject. They can describe what landscapes and cities are like and give sound reasons for any changes taking place. They understand the links between people and changes in the environment. One group of pupils in Year 8, for example, used their very good knowledge of the rainforest environment in Brazil to discuss successfully the effects on the environment of the exploitation of the region's resources. In written and much oral work pupils make good use of geographical terms, which the higher-attaining pupils use fluently. In Years 10-11 pupils use geographical models effectively to support their understanding of such topics as the growth of cities, methods of farming and industrial location. Pupils have good knowledge of what places are like and generally know where the major ones are. Pupils with special educational needs have a sound basic knowledge of the subject and complete work accurately.

195. Pupils extract information effectively from a range of resource material to complete exercises and for research. In one lesson pupils in Year 10, for instance, successfully used a series of maps in an atlas to explain why types of farming differ in various parts of Britain. In Years 10-11 pupils have a good knowledge of the methods of geographical enquiry, collecting and analysing data and drawing conclusions. They use these skills successfully to map, classify, describe and explain the pattern of land

use in Leeds city centre. Written work is of a generally good quality: it is fluent, well structured and well presented, with few spelling errors. Pupils have good numerical skills. They use statistical data to construct and analyse graphs successfully and use mathematical formulae in Years 10-13 to help to test hypotheses. In Years 10-11 most pupils make very good progress in their studies.

196. Teaching is normally of a good standard and one third of it is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. They give clear explanations, with pertinent illustrative examples, to ensure that pupils have a firm understanding of the topic. Lessons are well planned. They incorporate clear objectives and a variety of well-structured exercises, using good quality resources, to gain pupils' interest and arouse their curiosity. The best lessons encourage pupils to use the knowledge they have gained in previous lessons in a new context to reinforce their understanding. Pupils in Year 9, for example, used their knowledge of earthquakes and volcanoes to develop and test hypotheses about the reasons for where they occur. They used imaginatively designed resources to reach well thought out conclusions.

197. Lessons are well prepared and organised, with the result that they start briskly and move smoothly from one activity to another. Work is pitched at an appropriate level and materials are carefully matched to the needs of individual pupils. This enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. In the majority of lessons teachers involve all pupils in the work. In the sixth form, however, some lessons are dominated by lengthy discussion, mainly led by the teacher imparting information. Here the teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have encouraging relationships with pupils and provide positive, sensitive and well-informed support. Marking is up to date and generally of very good quality, with appropriate comments to help pupils to improve.

198. Pupils learn well. They always work hard and at a good pace, maintaining concentration throughout lessons. The majority have the confidence to ask and answer questions and show a deep interest in the work. Pupils are quick to acquire new knowledge and skills. One group of pupils in the sixth form, for example, quickly understood the value of a geographical model of the formation and growth of a glacier in explaining the changes in the movement of glaciers at times of climatic change.

199. Pupils are keen, well motivated and interested, and have a positive attitude to the subject. They are invariably well behaved. When they have the opportunity to work in pairs or groups, they cooperate effectively with one another and listen to the points of view of others. Books are maintained in good order and work is presented with care.

200. The scheme of work fully complies with national requirements and for Years 7-9 and 12-13 is of good quality. The teaching scheme for Years 10-11 does not provide a clear indication of progression through these years. A good programme of fieldwork enhances the curriculum and provides opportunity for pupils to learn a range of skills and techniques, reinforce their understanding and acquire a good basis for later examination coursework. A sound programme has been developed for the use of ICT. Good provision is made for pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

201. The procedures for assessment and recording the results are good, but the information is not used systematically to support the progress of individual pupils or to review the curriculum as a whole. The leadership and management of the department are good and fully committed to raising standards still further. The department has a clear sense of direction, its work is well organised and monitored, and planning for the future is well focused.

202. The accommodation is excellent. Good displays of pupils' work and of departmental visits enhance the environment and give the department a sense of identity. There are sufficient resources for teaching and they are of good quality. The department has maintained the high standards set at the time of the last inspection in pupils' attainment, teaching and assessment, and has made good progress in improving the quality of the teaching scheme, accommodation and resources. The hard-working and committed staff are effectively led and work well as a team. The department has the capacity to raise standards and improve still further.

HISTORY

203. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils' attainment is above that expected nationally, a similar standard to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils begin Year 7 at a level above the national average. Teachers assessed their pupils as being well above the national average in 1999 and in 2000 by the end of Year 9. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was above that seen nationally and a high proportion of pupils reach high levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate standards and make good progress. The vast majority of pupils reach a standard at the end of Year 9 that is at least in line with their earlier attainment.

204. Pupils in Years 7-9 see the causes of past events and successfully explain the reasons for actions taken by people in the past. They identify and explain changes and continuities over time. By correctly identifying the changes in railway technology, for example, pupils in Year 9 sorted into correct chronological order a series of pictures of locomotives from the period 1820-1840. They use a range of sources well to describe the past; higher attainers successfully evaluate the reliability and usefulness of historical sources. Many pupils write well at length. The highest-attaining pupils write essays in which they synthesise and evaluate evidence to come to a valid view of the past as, for example, in work by pupils in Year 9 on Richard Arkwright.

205. Pupils taking the GCSE course in Key Stage 4 reach an overall standard that is above the national average, a standard similar to that reported at the time of the last inspection. The above average results in 2000 were a little lower than those of 1999, when attainment was well above average. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C has been above average for the past five years. The attainment of both boys and girls is above their respective national averages. In 1999 the attainment of pupils in this subject was significantly better than that in most of their other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

206. The overall standard of work seen in Key Stage 4 was above the national average. Pupils taking GCSE use sources well to explain the past. In a Year 11 class, for instance, they confidently and competently analysed the motives behind Nazi propaganda posters from the 1930s to explain the rise to power of the Nazi party. Pupils in Year 10 identified a range of changes in medical knowledge between Roman and medieval times, and the reasons for them, understanding that change does not necessarily equate with progress.

207. The standard reached by pupils taking A-level is broadly in line with course requirements. The number of pupils gaining a pass grade at A-level in 2000, although lower than in 1999, was in line with the national average. The proportion gaining high grades was, however, considerably higher in 2000 than in 1999, although still below average. The standards of work seen during the inspection were broadly average for pupils in Year 13 and above average overall for pupils in Year 12. Group discussions by pupils in Year 12 showed a good knowledge and understanding of, for instance, the multi-causal nature of events in the French Revolution. Pupils in Year 13 interpreted sources well to identify contemporary criticisms of the treatment of the poor before 1834.

208. The quality of teaching is good overall and was very good in two-fifths of lessons seen. It is very good in Years 7-9. The overall standard is an improvement on that reported at the last inspection. Teachers know their subject well at all levels and communicate it effectively. As a result, pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding about the past. Teachers have a sound grasp of the levels of attainment at Key Stage 3, an improvement since the last inspection.

209. Appropriately high expectations of pupils and suitable work frequently challenge the highest-attaining pupils and allow them to work at a high standard. As part of a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils were asked to consider whether the different views about Mary Tudor during and immediately after her lifetime were valid and to explain why there were different views about her. The work set for pupils with

special educational needs is suitably challenging for their ability: where teaching groups have a wide range of attainment levels within them, teachers usually provide simplified texts or suitable guidance for writing to give the pupils extra help. The result is that all pupils make good progress in their learning.

210. An appropriate variety of teaching methods, including individual study, work in pairs or groups and whole-class discussion, ensures that pupils have good opportunities to learn in a range of different ways. Whole-class work with a Year 9 group on the rise and decline of canals, for instance, not only extended and deepened pupils' understanding of the impact of events on canal companies, but also provided good practice in numeracy as pupils calculated the companies' profits and losses over a period of years. Pupils in Year 12 were asked to work in groups to brainstorm the reasons for the fall of the monarchy in France in 1792, before feeding back their findings to the whole class.

211. Teachers manage their pupils well, with a firm but friendly approach. Most pupils show enthusiasm for, and commitment to, their work. Most clearly want to achieve good standards and work hard to do so. As a result, they make good progress in acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding. Work in pairs or groups is done with good cooperation and tolerance. Pupils listen to their teachers' instructions carefully and concentrate well on their work. A small number in Key Stage 4, however, tend to rely too heavily on their teacher and give up too quickly when the work is difficult.

212. The subject meets the statutory teaching requirements for Key Stage 3. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department has been absent due to illness for some time, but the team-work of the staff has ensured that the work of the department has continued satisfactorily. There is a clear commitment to improving the above-average attainment at GCSE and to improving that at A-level. The recently completed accommodation is of very good quality and provides a stimulating environment for pupils. The provision of textbooks and audio-visual resources is good. The lack of any up-to-date computers in the department is a weakness and the limited availability of centrally provided ICT at times suitable to the department restricts the use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

213. The previous inspection reported that statutory requirements were not met at Key Stage 3 and that the school should improve its provision and annual reports to parents. Following the very recent completion of new teaching rooms, as part of major rebuilding works, and the acquisition and replacement of equipment, the school is now poised to move forward rapidly. Because of limited resources, the school has not ensured that all pupils have a sufficient experience in the use of the subject throughout Years 7-11. Statutory requirements are still not met and standards of achievement vary considerably across year groups. Reports to parents still do not meet statutory requirements. Unsatisfactory progress overall has been made since 1996.

214. At the end of Key Stage 3 attainment is close to average overall. Pupils' attainment is above the standard normally found nationally in handling information and data. Two reasons for this are the speed with which most pupils learn and the extent to which most work independently on equipment at home. Their standard on other aspects is below average, because they have not been taught enough to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum.

215. The assessments made by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2000 indicated that the proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 5 was well above the national average. Boys and girls achieved similarly, but fewer boys than girls reached at least Level 6. Results were similar in 1999. Pupils' level of knowledge and skills is not as high in ICT as in some other subjects by the end of Key Stage 3, because they have taught lessons in the subject only in Year 7. In Years 8-9 pupils have few opportunities to use ICT in many subjects.

216. As a result of their lessons in Year 7, all pupils have good basic knowledge and skills in processing text and images - as, for example, to work in small groups to produce, desktop publish and

critically assess a children's story book. They understand simple programming to create shapes and patterns and know how to write a procedure. They have insufficient experience in data-handling software, for instance, in science or in computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) in design and technology.

217. Overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is below average, in contrast to other National Curriculum subjects within the school. Not all pupils take the subject in Year 10 and the use of ICT in other subjects is limited: National Curriculum requirements are not met. In both 1999 and 2000 very few pupils entered for GCSE and AS-level examinations, the results of which were below average. Standards overall are below the national expectation and fall short of pupils' general abilities.

218. A new online GNVQ Intermediate course in ICT is taken by about a third of the pupils in Year 10 for two hours each week and by all pupils in Year 11 for one hour a week. The course enables them to perform well and rapidly achieve high standards of technical knowledge and skills in presenting information. Pupils in the sixth form are on target to achieve the expected standards of the new GCE AS-level and A-level courses and the Advanced GNVQ course in ICT, gaining the necessary higher-order skills in information-handling.

219. Over Years 7-9 the majority of pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in their studies. The ICT lessons in Year 7 allow pupils to make rapid progress and to achieve high standards through units of work that are very well planned and matched to their abilities. Provision is made for gifted pupils to develop additional skills through extension activities. They learn, use and spell correctly the vocabulary and other elements of programs, images, desktop publishing and multimedia. They develop well the skill of following written instructions and, through speaking and listening carefully, understand the need for clarity in framing verbal instructions. In Years 8-9 they make insufficient progress because of inadequate opportunities in most other subjects. Many pupils who have good access to ICT at home maintain their basic competencies from Year 7 by working independently. They generally lack, however, the breadth of study and structure to secure full progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject.

220. In Key Stage 4 (from September 2000) pupils opting to take the GNVQ course in Year 10 and all pupils in Year 11 acquire appropriate skill in the use and styles of presentation and techniques used to produce documents. Pupils in Year 10 receive more teaching and consequently progress more quickly than pupils in Year 11; the latter year group received no timetabled lessons after Year 7 and currently have half the teaching time of pupils in Year 10. The poor access to ICT in previous years, especially for older pupils, is justifiably reflected in parental concerns about the school's lack of structured provision and the hindrance to pupils' progress. Pupils in the sixth form following the new GNVQ Advanced ICT units and the GCE AS-level and A-level courses rapidly improve their ICT skills to a suitable standard - as seen, for example, in a lesson in Year 12 that developed pupils' understanding of issues surrounding access to, and use of, the Internet.

221. Throughout the school pupils enjoy their lessons and approach their work with enthusiasm. They are attentive, respond well to teachers' questions and pose questions of their own. They are highly motivated by the very good quality of specialist teaching that helps them to make rapid progress towards high standards in a range of techniques and skills - as, for instance, in Year 7 when they used short cuts on the keyboard to edit images or solved problems in Year 13 by a data-flow diagram for a business system. They concentrate hard to complete work at a brisk pace. They cooperate well with teachers and other pupils, collaborating to share resources effectively. Pupils have good opportunities to work independently and are encouraged to reflect on the quality of their work, but do not always make sufficient notes as they work that could underpin later written evaluations.

222. The quality of teaching ICT throughout the school is satisfactory overall. The quality of specialist teaching, however, is usually at least good at all stages and was very good in three-quarters of the lessons observed. Specialist teachers have deep knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Their lesson planning and guidance materials are sufficiently detailed to ensure that pupils of all abilities learn effectively and in depth. They set pupils high but realistic targets and give very skilled individual support.

223. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Specialist teachers encourage pupils to become independent in the way they learn. They use explanation and questions well to establish key facts and to explore attitudes and issues surrounding the use of ICT. They give good support and individual feedback to individual pupils in lessons to ensure that their understanding is secure. Many staff in other subjects are confident in using ICT, but the level of use within subject departments is generally too low to promote pupils' learning satisfactorily. It is, however, used effectively in design and technology (with circuit designs, for instance), modern foreign languages, PE and GNVQ courses.

224. The department is very well led. Curricular organisation, lesson planning and the assessment of pupils' performance are strengths of the specialist department. Strong teamwork, especially among the core of specialists, is a marked feature of the school's work. New teaching schemes of good quality include a revised scheme of work for Year 7, the introduction of a GNVQ Intermediate course in Key Stage 4, and both a GNVQ Advanced and a GCE AS-level course in Year 12. The recent appointment of well-qualified technical staff to support ICT throughout the school and to manage the new computer network on a full-time basis ensures that the school is now in a position to move forward rapidly in this subject. The range of usage and the standards achieved are not, however, sufficiently monitored and audited across the school

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

225. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French and German by the end of Key Stage 3 is above the national average; a significant minority achieve at a well above average level. Teachers' assessments for the end of Key Stage 3 in both 1999 and 2000 indicated an overall attainment well above the national average.

226. In Years 7-9 pupils' understanding of foreign languages in the classroom is good and above average. They extract information successfully, for example, from cassette recordings. They acquire good oral skills in lessons through both the revision of previous work and the introduction of new vocabulary or structures. Higher-attaining pupils in a Year 8 French class, for instance, revised school subjects at the beginning of the lesson, learned and explained the reasons for liking their selected subject and linked the two ideas with a conjunction. In an assessment test in a Year 9 German class pupils acted as the teacher, putting questions competently to other pupils in a presentation.

227. The standard of written work of the majority of pupils in Years 7-9 is well above average. Many pupils write at length in French and German, showing good knowledge of suitable vocabulary and relevant grammatical structures. In Year 9, for instance, pupils have good knowledge of the perfect tense and write accurately.

228. In 1999 and 2000 the proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the range A*-C in French was significantly above the national average in the full-course GCSE examination. A very high proportion of both boys and girls achieved the top (A* or A) grades, although no boy secured an A* grade in 2000. In German, the proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C was above the national average in 1999 and well above it in 2000. The proportion of higher grades gained by both boys and girls was well above the national average. Girls' performance over the last two years in both languages has been better than that of boys.

229. At the end of Key Stage 4 the overall standard is well above average. Pupils have a thorough understanding of the foreign languages. Higher-attaining pupils in a Year 11 German lesson, for example, readily obtained many details about an accident report from a cassette recording. Pupils have an appropriately high level of oral skill. Lower-attaining pupils in a Year 10 class practised prices in French currency at a satisfactory level, whilst high attainers in Year 11 used a present participle construction when reporting their particular "accident". The French work of Year 10 pupils in writing about when they were young, accompanied by photographs, was very impressive. Written work in French and German is of a very high standard. In the scrutiny of written work during the inspection the exercise books of two girls (one for each language) were outstanding.

230. The proportion of pupils in the small groups studying French and German who attained passes in the GCE A-level examinations in 1999 and 2000 was above the national average. The number of passes at the higher (A and B) grades was also good. Attainment by the end of Year 13 is above average. Understanding of the foreign languages is good. Year 13 pupils in German succeeded in obtaining many details from a recorded interview with a painter. Year 12 pupils in the French class showed good understanding of an article dealing with eating habits. The written work that supports the range of topics covered is generally of a good, average standard, although containing some elementary mistakes.

231. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good (and often very good). Pupils listen carefully, apply themselves well to their tasks and are well motivated. They generally show much interest in their work, but sometimes remain passive and do not volunteer information. They respond well to competitions, games and songs.

232. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and in one lesson in eight very good. It is predominantly good in Years 7-11 (although half is of a lower, satisfactory quality in Years 7-9) and satisfactory (occasionally very good) in the sixth form. The best features include the high level of use of a foreign language in class: this helps significantly to raise pupils' understanding in many lessons. Lessons are well planned and include an appropriate variety of tasks and different skills. Teachers have high expectations and challenge their pupils well in most lessons, so that they have to think and work hard.

233. Good use is made of resources, particularly the overhead projector, the cassette recorder and worksheets. A good example of this occurred in a French lesson in Year 9, where lower-attaining pupils made good progress in writing about holidays, consolidating their knowledge of the perfect tense and of leisure activities. Classroom management is sound. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good. Homework is set regularly to extend the work in class.

234. There are, however, aspects for improvement. In some lessons pupils participate too little in class activities, have infrequent opportunities to learn in pairs or groups and do not use the foreign language when seeking help from the teacher. The marking of exercise books is regular, but is not always encouraging or appreciative of the quality of the work produced. The presentation of written work is good, but pupils too rarely complete corrections as a means of improving their accuracy.

235. The department meets the statutory requirement to teach the National Curriculum programmes of study. Steps have already been taken to comply with the new national orders for the subject. Language options in Key Stage 4 enable pupils to begin the study of a new language for GCSE. The time allocation for the study of the second foreign language in Key Stage 3 is, however, too small. Information and communication technology is being used appropriately in the sixth form and in Year 11. Software is planned to be used in Years 7-9.

236. The management of the department is good. All teachers are committed to high attainment and this is reflected well in their results. The school is adopting effective measures to counter the lack of continuity for classes affected by the long-term absence of a senior member of the team. Monitoring of the department's work is, however, inadequate. A part-time, native speaker provides good opportunities for conversation in German for pupils in the sixth form. Foreign exchanges and good displays in the classroom enhance the overall provision. The department continues to maintain the high standards mentioned in the previous report.

MUSIC

237. By the end of Key Stage 3 the overall attainment of pupils is in line with the national average. A significant minority, however, attain standards that are above average in performing, improvising and musical understanding. Pupils perform, improvise and compose satisfactorily on keyboards where, for example, they use staff notation to play the theme from *Star Wars*. Although many need letter names written under the notes, a good proportion read from the stave directly and with reasonable fluency. Many pupils sing well, both in unison and in simple parts, in both their performed and composed pieces. By the

end of Year 9 most pupils have a fair knowledge of blues chords and sequences, of well-known European composers and their works and of Indian classical music.

238. Pupils' overall level of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above the national average. In the 1999 and 2000 GCSE results, taken together, 28 out of 42 pupils gained grades in the range A*-C. Four pupils gained A* grades. In work seen during the inspection, the overall standard of performance, composition and listening was above average. In one lesson, for instance, pupils read and sang a three-part madrigal with minimal support from the piano. This exercise enabled them to experience at first hand, and learn about, counterpoint, harmony and imitation in part-writing. Examples of work on tape and in manuscript form represent a fair understanding and mastery of composition of songs, piano pieces and arrangements for a small ensemble.

239. Only two pupils in Year 13 are at present taking A-level. In Year 12 nine are following the new AS-level syllabus with the option to take A2-level next year. Owing to the small numbers involved and the changing syllabus, it is inappropriate to form an overall judgement of pupils' attainment, comparative to the national average at the end of Year 13. A judgement on pupils' progress is given later.

240. The quality of learning in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of musical attainment. Their overall educational attainment on entry is, however, above average. The majority of pupils are quick learners and, where they maintain an interest in the subject, a significant minority reach an average standard by the end of the key stage.

241. Some especially rapid learning was observed in this key stage. In classes in Year 8, for example, pupils learned a simple song in three parts and understood how certain musical intervals created pleasing harmony. Most pupils develop an understanding of the emotional effect of music in, for example, film and TV soundtracks; they then apply these satisfactorily in Year 9. Over Years 7-9 most pupils increase their musical knowledge, understanding and skills, albeit at very different rates. They learn such common musical forms as call and response, and the use of drone, ostinato and variations. Regular practice on keyboards underpins their skills and knowledge of melody and harmony.

242. In Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress in their studies. At this stage the requirements of the GCSE course serve to motivate pupils well to reach the required standards in performing, composition and musical understanding. Most pupils sing with enthusiasm, not only to enjoy the music, but also as a means of understanding it. In a lesson in Year 10, for example, pupils read and sang a version of *It ain't necessarily so*, listened to a professional version of it and analysed the instrumentation and structure of the piece. Through Years 10-11 their interest develops very well and they show increasing commitment to the subject. In individual work on composition they take up ideas well and develop an intelligent approach to instrumentation, musical form and expressiveness. They use the computer well to help them to notate and develop compositions.

243. In the sixth form pupils learn very well. The curriculum, determined by external examination requirements, is demanding, especially in respect of aural perception. By Year 13, pupils learn to hear and identify different parts in set works (as, for example, Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*) and to describe in appropriate technical language the harmony, form and historical context of the music. In one lesson pupils played short extracts on the piano and memorised them well. They show genuine interest in the subject at this stage, evaluating their work carefully and taking increasing responsibility for their own learning. They demonstrate an interest in music not only in schoolwork, but also in their daily lives. Progress is good at this stage.

244. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school. Most are interested in the subject and work with sustained effort. In spite of the disenchantment of a minority of pupils in Year 9, attitudes to work and behaviour develop very well over the whole school period. Behaviour is very good in the majority of lessons and most pupils form very good relationships with one another and with their teachers. In a small number of classes, a minority of pupils lose concentration and sometimes try to distract their peers. Mostly, however, teachers' careful attention to the design and pace of lessons,

together with very firm and consistent discipline, ensures that sufficient progress is made by all pupils in the class.

245. Teaching is good overall. One quarter of the lessons seen were judged to be very good. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. The teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise. They frequently use their own skills to demonstrate how a piece should be played or to accompany singers and instrumentalists. In the sixth form, teachers have very good aural skills and background knowledge that they use to stretch the pupils musically. Across the year groups, satisfactory attention is paid to pupils' literacy skills, especially where technical vocabulary is concerned. Good attention is paid to clear writing and presentation in essays on the history of music. Lesson preparation is very thorough. Overall, teachers' expectations are appropriately high. Pupils, including the few with deep-seated behavioural difficulties, are managed well.

246. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is very good throughout the school. In Key Stage 3, schemes of work, coupled with criteria for assessment, are displayed on classroom walls. Pupils are clear what they need to do in order to achieve high grades. Although homework in the subject is not included on the school's timetable in Key Stage 4 or the sixth form, pupils and teachers successfully negotiate when and how it should happen.

247. The department has been well managed. At the time of the inspection, the recently retired head of music was in part-time attendance. Around 70 pupils receive instrumental lessons, but few of these pupils reach high grades. At present about 20 pupils play in the orchestra and brass group, and up to 30 sing in the choir. Pupils sing well. The standard of instrumental playing is, however, not as high as would normally be expected in this type of school.

248. Music makes a good contribution to the spiritual, social and cultural life of the school. Some improvements to the accommodation have been made since the previous inspection. It is now adequate, as long as group sizes do not exceed 20. The school has insufficient ICT / music workstations to meet the needs of the greater number of pupils now taking the subject, especially in Years 9-13.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

249. At the end of both key stages and in the sixth form pupils' overall standard is higher than is normally found. By the end of Year 9 the vast majority of pupils perform the basic skills of a range of games to a good standard and use them confidently in games that are appropriate for their age, needs and abilities. In a rugby football lesson for boys in Year 9, for instance, nearly all made and received passes and ran well. Similarly, many girls in Year 9 are quick to judge the flight of a basketball, react to a partner or team member's signals and catch and pass skilfully. In athletics lessons girls in Year 8 display well above average coordination when, for example, performing the triple jump from a standing start. Boys have been taught to throw indoor javelins with correct technique.

250. In Years 10 and 11 boys and girls continue to improve their skills in games and develop their knowledge of tactical play to standards that are largely above average. Before the end of Key Stage 4 nearly all pupils play at least one major team game competently and their knowledge of the rules enables them to officiate effectively. In a basketball lesson for pupils in Year 10, for example, both boys and girls were challenged to plan and use attacking tactics based on their knowledge of their opponents' strengths and weaknesses. They did so most effectively and all pupils played a full part. Boys and girls in Year 11 play tennis to a higher standard than is often found. Scrutiny of the files of pupils following the GCSE course indicates that many pupils in Year 11 have a good knowledge and understanding of the theory of the subject. By the end of both key stages many pupils speak well and use correct technical terms.

251. In the sixth form about two-thirds of pupils regularly participate in a range of options on and off site. In a badminton session nearly all of those present played a competent game of doubles and have a very good knowledge of the rules. A small group of girls has made good progress over eight lessons in performing basic skills. Results in the GCE A-level examination in Sports Studies have been good over a

number of years. Passes at the higher (A/B) grades fell, however, in 2000 to 16 per cent and no pupil achieved an A grade, although all passed the examination. Many pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the theory of how performers acquire skill and how they make use of external cues. Dynamic teaching requires pupils to contribute to discussion and many speak well: one pupil soundly challenged an established theoretical model.

252. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, make good progress in lessons and over longer periods of time. There are a number of factors for this success - appropriately demanding teaching, pupils' enthusiasm and commitment throughout lessons, and the increased number of lessons in a unit of work in Key Stage 4. The need to provide pupils with adequate time to practise, consolidate and refine their skills is fully understood as a key element of progress. In several lessons the benefits of this change in practice were seen, most noticeably in dance and basketball in Key Stage 4.

253. In both key stages pupils make very good progress in dance. Girls with no previous experience achieved an average standard in this element after only 18 lessons. Pupils dress well and (usually) quickly. They are attentive, listen very well and observe demonstrations perceptively. They work well together as members of groups and teams and compete strongly, but with due regard for rules and the spirit of the game. Most pupils taking examination courses maintain their files to a good standard and with pride; a small minority do not.

254. About three-quarters of the teaching is good or very good in equal measure. It is occasionally outstanding. In the remaining lessons it is satisfactory. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. They expect and get much from pupils. They set work that challenges pupils of all levels of attainment. A noticeable feature of lessons is the excellent way in which pupils with special educational needs (and especially those with physical disabilities) are fully involved. Teachers make very good use of question and answer methods to probe and extend the level of pupils' understanding.

255. The curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance and meets statutory requirements. Curricular content and strategies for teaching are constantly under review and changes are made where it is felt pupils will benefit - as, for instance, in the increased number of lessons for units of work. Teachers assess and record pupils' attainment accurately and make good use of the data to guide curricular planning. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but not all marking gives pupils sufficient information about what they need to do to improve. Most reports to parents now provide some information of pupils' attainment and progress, but a few concentrate too much on pupils' efforts and attitudes.

256. Facilities for the subject are good overall. The playing fields do not drain well and the changing rooms are of poor quality. A major refurbishment is planned for the latter. The new dance studio is an excellent addition and floodlit tennis courts are planned.

257. The department has very strong, benevolent leadership. Teachers and pupils find the department a stimulating place in which to work. Three newly qualified teachers benefit from a very good induction programme. The award of Sports College status is a major achievement and follows several years of hard work, planning and fund-raising. Excellent progress has been made in establishing policies and procedures that will involve four secondary schools, one special school and 25 primary schools as part of the School Sport Coordinators' Initiative.

258. The curriculum is complemented by a very good range of extracurricular activities, in which almost two-thirds of pupils participate and thereby significantly enhance their skills and their personal and social development. Fifteen teachers give up much time to coach, supervise and officiate at these activities.