

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN WALL CATHOLIC SCHOOL

HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103534

Headteacher: Mr B Toft

Reporting inspector: Mr L Waters
2835

Dates of inspection: 18 – 21 September 2000

Inspection number: 223990

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 to 16 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Oxhill Road Handsworth Birmingham |
| Postcode: | B21 8HH |
| Telephone number: | 0121 554 1825 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body at the above address |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Sean Brady |
| Date of previous inspection: | October 1996 |

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|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| L Waters 2835 | Registered inspector | | What sort of school is it? |
| | | | How well is the school led and managed? |
| | | | What should the school do to improve further? |
| S Elomari 11072 | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| | | | How well does the school care for its students? |
| | | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| J Billington 2779 | Team inspector | English | |
| | | English as an additional language | |
| P Hall 4493 | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | |
| K Havercroft 31637 | Team inspector | Music | |
| J Hodgetts 12744 | Team inspector | History | |
| | | Equal opportunities | |
| B Lambert 4525 | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| G Large 12595 | Team inspector | Design & technology | |
| S Rogers 17207 | Team inspector | Geography | How well are students taught? |
| R Spinks 2783 | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| | | Special educational needs | |
| A Stoddart 11779 | Team inspector | Science | |
| J Thirlwall 3413 | Team inspector | Art | |
| C Thompson 27982 | Team inspector | Information and communication technology | |
| C Warn 4293 | Team inspector | | The school's results and achievements |
| | | | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John Wall Roman Catholic School serves the Handsworth area of Birmingham. It currently has 360 boys and 275 girls aged 11 to 16 on roll. Although there is a broad spread of ability amongst the pupils, a high proportion have low levels of attainment when they arrive. The school is over-subscribed and has substantial populations of pupils from African-Caribbean (31%), Asian-Indian (26%), and Vietnamese (14%) ethnic groups as well as those from indigenous white backgrounds. About 40% of pupils are from Roman Catholic families. The majority live near the school which is in an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. Close to two-fifths of pupils are eligible for free-school meals and a similar number speak English as an additional language. These are both well above the national averages. About a third of pupils are identified as having special educational needs because of either learning or behavioural difficulties. This is also well above the national average, although only two have formal statements of educational need. A high proportion of pupils, over 80%, continue in education after leaving. The school is part of the *Excellence in Cities* initiative which aims to raise standards and aspirations in bigger cities.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which provides a secure, harmonious learning environment. The great majority of pupils behave well and there is a strong ethos of care. Exclusions are rare. There is a substantial amount of good teaching which enables the majority of pupils to make good progress although poor behaviour spoils some lessons in Years 8 and 9. Standards of attainment, although well below national averages, are high in comparison to similar schools. An increasing need to use temporary teachers has had a detrimental effect on pupils' progress in a few subjects. Improvements in accommodation and resources, particularly new technology, are still required. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- the great majority of pupils learn effectively and achieve well;
- there is a high proportion of good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11;
- very good personal relationships are a strong feature of the school;
- most pupils behave well around school showing tolerance and respect for others and for school property;
- staff share a sense of purpose with an increasing emphasis on raising levels of attainment;
- specific initiative grants are being used wisely to improve facilities and opportunities.

What could be improved

- assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress;
- access to computers and breadth of teaching in information and communication technology;
- accommodation, particularly for science, music and physical education;
- the way the school reviews its work;
- support for pupils with special educational needs.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1996, pupils' levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 have improved in line with the national trend. Results at GCSE have remained broadly static until 1999 but have shown significant gains in 2000, exceeding the school's published targets. The quality of teaching has improved overall with 92% of lessons observed now judged at least satisfactory. The school's leaders have ensured that the strengths identified in 1996 have been maintained but progress on the key issues from the last inspection has been insufficient overall. Improvements in lesson planning, particularly to benefit the more able, and in linking departmental developments to school priorities, have been satisfactory. However, progress in improving provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and learning resources generally has been too slow.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| GCSE/GNVQ examinations | D | E | E | A |

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

Pupils make good and accelerating progress as they move through the school. Most achieve well. Standards are generally below those expected nationally but well above those in other schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Test results at the end of Year 9 in 1999 were below the national average in English and well below in mathematics and science. The number of pupils reaching Levels 6 and 7 in Year 9 is increasing. GCSE results in 2000, although still below the national average, showed a significant improvement over those in previous years and comfortably exceeded the school's published targets. The school successfully works hard to ensure that as many pupils as possible achieve at least one GCSE grade. By the end of each key stage, current standards in lessons are now closer to the national average in mathematics and science although still below in English. Middle and higher ability pupils generally do well. Pupils from Asian ethnic backgrounds generally achieve particularly highly. On average, girls achieve more highly than boys and the difference is greater than in most schools. Some pupils for whom English is an additional language are amongst the highest achievers. Standards of literacy and numeracy, although low on entry into Year 7, are satisfactory by the end of Year 11.

At the end of Year 11 in 1999 pupils performed best in geography, art, business studies and physical education. They were least successful in English literature and the short course in French. In all years, attainment in English remains below national standards but in mathematics and science it has improved and current pupils are working close to expected levels. Overall, pupils have unsatisfactory skills using information and communication technology although they are improving fast in Year 7.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Pupils take a positive approach to their studies and most enjoy school. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Pupils are polite, well-behaved and show mutual respect for each other and to adults in the school. A minority in Years 8 and 9 disrupt learning in some lessons. |
| Personal development and relationships | Personal relationships are particularly effective and contribute to a sense of security, tolerance and an absence of oppressive behaviour. |
| Attendance | Attendance levels have improved recently and are satisfactory overall although there is still a significant number of poor attenders. |

Pupils' positive attitudes to school and to learning are particular strengths as are the strong relationships between different groups of pupils. A small number of younger pupils sometimes disrupt lessons, particularly of less experienced teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Quality of teaching of pupils: | aged 11-14 years | aged 14-16 years |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Satisfactory but with some weaknesses observed during the week of the inspection. | 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.

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. The high proportion of good teaching is a strength of the school, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and how to teach it effectively to different groups. They ensure that the great majority of pupils, irrespective of background, can make progress. Most teachers manage pupils well but a few are not sufficiently skilled to prevent a small number of badly behaved pupils disrupting others, especially in Years 8 and 9. Some of these are very inexperienced or temporary staff. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to motivate and engage pupils and this is increasingly benefiting the most able. Teachers help pupils improve their basic reading, writing and mathematics' skills satisfactorily. There is room for improved use of homework and marking in many subjects.

The great majority of pupils apply themselves well in lessons and most work productively and at a good pace. They improve their rate of learning as they mature and, in Years 10 and 11 particularly, demonstrate interest, commitment and the ability to concentrate. In some subjects, pupils would benefit from a clearer understanding of their own potential and progress towards it. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The curriculum is restricted by inadequate access to ICT. In other respects it meets statutory requirements and addresses pupils' needs satisfactorily. The range of vocational courses is limited and further development is hampered by staff and accommodation restrictions. Several schemes of work need updating. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Pupils with statements are given appropriate help but support for others with special educational needs is very limited. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with English as an additional language. It is appropriately targeted at those in most need of help. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The school has effective arrangements which contribute well to pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Arrangements to support cultural development and for health, careers and sex education are all satisfactory. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Staff exercise high levels of care and the well-being of pupils is a conspicuous priority throughout the school. Monitoring of attendance and behaviour is good. Systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory but improvements are planned. Specialist tutors usefully help pupils to improve their learning but need to identify sharper targets. |

The school works satisfactorily with parents. Effective steps are taken to communicate with and involve families from different cultural groups.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher and senior staff have established a clear ethos of care with an increasing emphasis on raising levels of attainment. The management skills of subject leaders are generally good. Whole-school policies in several key areas need better co-ordination. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors are aware of the strengths of the school and deploy their skills in support of its work. Their involvement in leading and evaluating its work remains limited. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Regular subject reviews contribute usefully to improvements but there is a need for tighter whole school planning of improvements. More effective use of data about attainment has started. More rigorous, diagnostic evaluation is needed, particularly to identify and tackle weak teaching and the provision for pupils with special educational needs. |
| The strategic use of resources | Resources are well matched to identified priorities. The commitment to maintaining high levels of teaching staff has constrained spending elsewhere, particularly on resources for learning and classroom support staff. |

Overall, the provision of staff is satisfactory but accommodation and resources for learning are both inadequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• their children like school and make good progress;• there is a positive ethos and good behaviour;• teachers expect pupils to work hard and achieve their best;• it is easy to approach the school with a worry. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the detrimental impact of high staff turnover and consequent use of supply staff;• information about how well their child is progressing;• the range of activities outside lessons. |

Inspectors endorse the views of parents whilst recognising that staff have worked hard to minimise any negative impact of temporary teachers. Staff have tried several strategies to involve parents more closely with the life of the school, with partial success.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standardised test scores show that in most years only approximately 30% of the pupils who enter Year 7 are attaining at average or above average levels. This proportion has risen nearer to 50% for the first time with the September 2000 intake. Although attainment levels throughout the school are below those on average nationally, taking account of the context of the school, the overall standard of achievement is satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 3 and is good by the end of Key Stage 4.
2. In 1999 the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum test results were below the national average in English and well below the national average in mathematics and science. However, when compared to similar schools (that is schools with a comparable proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals) the overall performance of pupils at Key Stage 3 was very high. The gap between the national average and school's test results in English and mathematics has reduced over the three years to 1999, whilst in science the gap has remained the same.
3. The proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding Level 5 in both English and science tests was very high compared to similar schools and was broadly in line with that of similar schools for mathematics. Using the same comparison the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 was close to the average. In 2000 a few pupils reached Level 7 for the first time. Lower ability pupils did better in English than in mathematics or science. In 1999 in English only 5% of pupils were performing below Level 4, whilst in mathematics and science the figures were 17% and 18%. Girls attained more highly than boys at the end of Key Stage 3 although the difference was similar to the national difference.
4. The standards attained in the foundation subjects by the end of Key Stage 3, based on teachers' assessments of pupils' work, were high in physical education, average in art, design & technology, geography, history and modern foreign languages, but below average in ICT and music. Taking into account the known attainment of pupils on entry, the overall results obtained at the end of Key Stage 3 are better than might be expected for middle and higher ability pupils but slightly worse for other pupils.
5. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grade C or above remains below the national average, but is very high compared to similar schools. In 1999 23% of pupils reached this standard, whilst in 2000 this proportion rose sharply to 34% which represents a notable improvement from the time of the last inspection. This figure is above the school's published target which itself represented a significant step above the pattern of previous years. The average total point score rose significantly from 29.8 in 1999 to 31.9 in 2000. This rise is particularly due to the performance of middle and higher attaining pupils. Two indicators that highlight the performance of lower attaining pupils fell slightly from 1999 to 2000. These were the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades G or above (down from 89%

to 87%) and the percentage achieving one or more G grade (down from 97% to 95%). The challenge that the school now faces is to sustain the good performance of middle and higher attaining pupils whilst boosting that of the lower attaining pupils.

6. There is an above-average difference in the point scores obtained at GCSE by boys and girls. From 1997 to 1999 boys on average achieved 8.0 points below the national average for boys whilst the comparable figure for girls was 5.4 points. Figures provided by the school show a marked variation in 2000 in the proportion of pupils from differing ethnic groups achieving five or more grades A* to C. For example, two thirds of pupils of Asian-Indian ethnic origin achieved this standard, as did half of pupils of Vietnamese ethnic origin. In contrast, under a quarter of white and African-Caribbean pupils reached this standard. The greatest proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are in the highest attaining groups, indicating that such pupils make good progress. A further challenge to the school is therefore to uphold the strengths seen in these patterns of achievement whilst seeking further ways to raise the relative performance of some boys and some pupils of white and African-Caribbean ethnicity.
7. In 1999 pupils performed best in art, business studies, geography and physical education at GCSE. They were least successful in English literature. The school's provisional analysis of the 2000 GCSE results show that art and physical education results remain high in relative terms and that results in English have improved. Particular problems were encountered with the short course in French. Results in geography were lower in 2000 than in 1999 because of a weaker performance of girls. Results in drama were good, but staffing problems have meant that this course cannot continue from September 2000. Compared with most schools, attainment across the curriculum in ICT is below the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 4.
8. The work seen in pupils' books and folders indicates that current attainment levels broadly match those reflected in recent test and examination results in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. There are some notable exceptions. In mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are working at standards only slightly below nationally expected levels and in Key Stage 4 they are broadly in line with expected levels. Similarly, in science standards in Years 9 and 11 are now closer to national averages than they have been in recent years.
9. Pupils' basic literacy skills are generally below those normally demonstrated by pupils of similar ages. Most speak competently and confidently. However, writing is less well developed with many pupils having difficulties with grammar, spelling, presentation and organisation. Skills of extended writing are generally weak and electronic word processors are rarely used to aid drafting. Most pupils read competently, including those for whom English is an additional language but their research skills are often weak.
10. Pupils' numeracy skills are low on entry but improve significantly, despite little planned cross-curricular emphasis. By the time they leave school pupils can handle number and measures in everyday contexts confidently and with accuracy. Most can present data clearly and interpret graphs and charts appropriately.

11. The overall progress that pupils make from the start of Year 10 to the end of Year 11 is good. There is evidence that closer mentoring and support for pupils at risk of not meeting their performance targets, extra revision sessions and better examination preparation have all contributed to higher standards at GCSE. The school's positive approach to inclusion has meant that some pupils who were at risk of being excluded have remained at school and with additional help have achieved at least one G grade.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Most pupils have a positive attitude to school and are diligent in lessons. This contributes well to their achievement and progress. The majority, particularly in Years 10 and 11, usually show a good level of interest in their work, even when occasionally the tasks lack challenge. In only two of the sixty-six lessons observed in Years 10 and 11 was behaviour unsatisfactory. However, in Years 8 and 9 there is a small but significant number of pupils, mainly boys, whose lack of interest and application sometimes disrupts lessons. In 20% of lessons observed in Years 8 and 9 attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory or poor. This has a negative effect on learning for these classes.
13. In lessons where the demands are challenging, for example in English, mathematics and business studies, pupils often enjoy their work. Almost all older pupils take a pride in their work. Most concentrate well and persevere to complete the set tasks. When pupils are offered the opportunity to work in small groups they co-operate well and work effectively. For example, in English, Year 8 pupils collaborated to produce a school brochure for Year 6 pupils. They support one another well in most lessons and listen effectively to the teacher and to one another. When using equipment, they co-operate sensibly. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language generally share these positive attitudes. However, a minority with behavioural difficulties sometimes find it difficult to settle to work when they do not have sufficient support.
14. Pupils respond well and enthusiastically when given the responsibility for their own learning, for example through investigative work, research or decision making exercises. However, such opportunities are still not as well developed as they might be across the curriculum especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
15. The concerted efforts of staff to place a high priority on establishing and maintaining good relationships is a key strength of the school. Standards of behaviour around the school are good. The school functions as an orderly community, notable in terms of its high degree of racial harmony. Pupils are almost always polite and courteous, showing respect to staff and to their peers. They talk willingly and informatively to adults. They treat their own, other pupils' and the school's property with due respect. For example, although much of the equipment is old it remains clean and serviceable. The programme of extra-curricular activities, which is strong in sport, has a positive impact on the personal development of those pupils who choose to take part. Pupils benefit from the programme of personal and social education in all years whilst work experience helps Year 10 pupils prepare for life after school.

16. There is a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions. However, while pupils take a pride in the commendation of their work by teachers and other pupils, many do not value the formal merit system. This limits the effectiveness of the scheme, particularly in Years 10 and 11 when the majority of pupils see it as irrelevant. Appropriate sanctions are in place and are understood by pupils. The rate of exclusion is low and permanent exclusion is used only as a last resort. There were no permanent exclusions in the last academic year and the great majority of pupils who started in Year 10 went on to sit at least one GCSE examination.
17. The very good quality of relationships is a strength of the school. The great majority of pupils relate very well to one another, teachers and other adults. They respond well to the positive role models provided by all staff. They treat others with courtesy and consideration and display good levels of respect for the values, feelings and beliefs of other people. Older pupils are encouraged to help younger ones through the pupil support system which links senior pupils to form groups in the lower school. Pupils report that bullying and other forms of oppressive behaviour are rare. They are aware that the school takes a strong line on bullying and racism and report that these are dealt with promptly and effectively if they do occur.
18. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 11 to take responsibility, although many are of a routine nature. The school council, intended to allow pupils' ideas and views to be heard, has fallen into disuse. Pupils were involved in writing the school's Code of Conduct when it was introduced and contribute to its updating regularly. Pupils in Year 9 take turns to act as school receptionists. A number of pupils in Year 10 are trained to support younger pupils in dealing with bullying. Year 10 pupils also have the chance to act as temporary prefects during Year 11 examination periods. Prefects in Year 11 have a range of duties, mainly helping staff control pupil movements at break and lunchtime. Pupils in all years undertake a considerable amount of fund-raising for a wide variety of charitable causes.
19. Attendance in the school is satisfactory overall, although with some unsatisfactory features. Attendance rates compare favourably with other schools in the local education authority. However, a significant number of pupils have attendance that is less than 70% and almost a third of pupils attend less than 90% of the time. This is unsatisfactory and has a negative effect on progress. During the year 1998-1999 attendance rates fell below 90%. Following this the school took various steps to monitor and improve attendance as a priority. As a result, attendance rates rose to 91% in 1999-2000. The rate of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. Although the majority of pupils are punctual, there is a significant amount of lateness in the mornings, some of which is due to transport difficulties. Almost all lessons begin on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Teaching

20. The quality of teaching overall has improved since the last inspection and the significant amount of good teaching is a strength of the school. In 1996 the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in just over 80% of lessons observed, and

good or very good in almost half of them. In this inspection the teaching in 92% of lessons was judged satisfactory or better and 64% were judged good, very good or excellent. Good teaching is not confined to a particular year group or subject. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is a particular strength and in Year 11 it was good or better in nearly three-quarters of lessons observed and never less than satisfactory.

21. In contrast to this general picture, the teaching in 20% of Year 8 lessons and 15% of Year 9 lessons was judged unsatisfactory. In several of these, the slow pace of work and absence of real challenge for some pupils meant their progress was slow. A significant proportion of the unsatisfactory lessons was by new teachers to the school who sometimes struggled to maintain good order in their classrooms. Some of these were inexperienced teachers who were only three weeks into their careers. In each case, these newly qualified teachers showed signs of rapid improvement and dealt with difficult classes more effectively as the inspection week progressed. Some unsatisfactory teaching occurred in the classes of a few more experienced teachers who failed adequately to manage the occasional awkward or disruptive behaviour of individuals or groups. At present, the school has no systematic process for identifying good and less than satisfactory teaching although, following a pilot last term, a school-wide programme of regular observations is planned to be introduced this term.
22. The large amount of good teaching in the school has its basis in teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject and of how to present this in the classroom. Most teachers know their subject well and know how to teach it effectively. This is a particular strength in modern foreign languages and physical education, but is good in much of the teaching in every other subject in the school.
23. Good classroom management and good teaching of basic skills generally complement teachers' confidence in their subject. The mathematics and geography departments pay particularly close attention to the teaching of basic literacy skills. However, there is little planned support for the development of pupils' numeracy and ICT skills across most subjects. In physical education, mathematics, English, art, design & technology, geography and history, classrooms are well managed and pupils' behaviour and attitudes are generally good or better. Strong classroom management is a particular strength of the modern foreign languages department.
24. Effective lesson planning also contributes well to the quality of teaching. In history, geography and business studies, teachers typically share the lesson aims with pupils and use these in structuring the session and setting timed targets for the group. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives in English and in modern foreign languages. Good lesson planning is also a notable feature in physical education, business studies, science and mathematics. Medium term plans and schemes of work vary in their quality and suitability. Some are up to date and clearly support teachers' day to day planning. Others, for example, in design & technology and at Key Stage 3 in geography, lack sufficient detail relating to learning and assessment objectives.
25. Other consistent features of good teaching are the high expectations teachers have of their pupils. Teachers are now generally setting more demanding tasks for pupils, and this is particularly so for more able children. Setting arrangements in the core subjects have enabled teachers to design more challenging work for higher

attaining pupils, and this is now a particular strength in mathematics and science lessons. More challenge for higher attaining pupils is still required in modern foreign languages, geography and music where the more able are not being fully stretched. In design & technology, geography and business education lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and their needs met by their teachers. However, elsewhere the needs of pupils with learning difficulties are not always fully met in lessons. There is a need for individual education plans to specify more explicitly the type of support that particular individuals are likely to benefit from and for some teachers to plan more carefully to meet those needs in their lessons. This is particularly the case whilst the number of teachers and teaching assistants able to offer more focused help to those with special educational needs remains very limited.

26. Homework is set in all subjects but there are inconsistencies in the amount and quality set. Homework is used effectively in modern foreign languages and in mathematics in Key Stage 4. In other subjects the use of homework is satisfactory overall. The best is challenging and makes pupils think, extending learning and interest. The poorest is low level, repetitive work, such as copying tasks, which contributes little to pupils' learning. Overall, there is scope to set more homework which promotes enquiry and investigative skills.
27. There are underlying weaknesses evident in many lessons relating to the quality and use of day-to-day assessment. The lack of detailed and clear whole-school guidance on assessment leads to inconsistencies in the amount and quality of assessments in, and between, subject departments. Statutory teacher assessments are not always based on a broad enough range of assessment materials related to National Curriculum levels. The quality of marking is variable. There is an effective assessment policy in modern foreign languages and good practice in the English, business studies and physical education departments. In other subjects the quality and use of ongoing assessment is unsatisfactory. Pupils are generally unclear of their level of attainment and the progress they are making. Targets set for individual pupils are often imprecise and do not indicate with sufficient clarity how improvements could be made.

Learning

28. There is a clear correlation between the quality of teaching and learning. In the great majority of lessons pupils make good progress and learn well. Learning is satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. A small proportion of pupils in Years 8 and 9, predominantly white and African-Caribbean boys, show negative attitudes to learning in some lessons. This seriously undermines their progress. On occasion, their behaviour is unsatisfactory and when it is not successfully managed by the teacher, the learning of significant numbers of other pupils in the class is adversely affected.
29. Learning is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils make very good progress, especially in Year 11 due mainly to teachers' high expectations, the swift pace of lessons and effective use of learning resources. Older pupils apply themselves well and respond positively to the opportunities presented by teachers.

30. More able pupils learn well in many subjects, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The learning and progress of the least able and those with special educational needs are not as strong as for other pupils. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science the more able learn well, but the progress of lower attaining pupils is not monitored sufficiently. This is particularly so for those without statements of special educational needs but who are recorded on the special educational needs register as having problems with their learning. There are very limited resources for basic skill work within the special educational needs department and this has a detrimental impact on the learning of lower attaining pupils. Individual education plans are too general and these have insufficient impact on pupils' learning and progress.

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

31. The curriculum provision of the school has a number of valuable strengths, but also some significant weaknesses, some of which are long established. Since the last inspection the overall quality of the curriculum provision has not significantly improved, partly because the school has not kept fully abreast of new developments.
32. Pupils are able to study all subjects of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3, although they do not get access to all of the required elements of ICT. Pupils do not have timetabled lessons for ICT as a subject in its own right. Some aspects of ICT are taught within components of a few other subjects, but collectively these experiences do not amount to a satisfactory coverage of the statutory requirements. This was a key issue to be resolved at the time of the last inspection and, despite some recent purchases of new computers and software, the matter has yet to be fully addressed. The strategies used for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory. There are good literacy support arrangements in geography and mathematics.
33. At Key Stage 4 similar problems related to ICT remain. Some recent (and helpful) moves to introduce core skills and citizenship into the curriculum have been made. A single group of pupils in Year 10 is taking citizenship instead of French as an experiment and a good start has been made with this course. A 'core skills' course is successfully meeting the needs of the minority of pupils who have been selected to take it. However, all other pupils would benefit from this course too. The school's development plan indicates an intention to introduce more vocational courses with stronger post-16 connections, but this has not been achieved for the academic year 2000-2001. This has been because of a combination of staffing problems and uncertainty about the best way forward in modernising the Key Stage 4 curriculum. There are relatively few vocational courses offered, and the successful GNVQ manufacturing course is only available in alternate years because of staffing constraints. More pupils wish to study GCSE courses in art, business studies, physical education and drama than there are places for. Thus there are significant issues of equality of access to the Key Stage 4 curriculum still to be resolved.
34. The provision made for personal, social and health education, including sex education and attention to drug misuse, is satisfactory. All pupils have a basic

introduction to the world of work and benefit from two weeks of work experience. Aspects of careers education are successfully taught in Years 9 to 11. Information to support pupils' career choices is available in printed and electronic form and is supplemented by interviews and other activities. Even so, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are less aware than they should be of the courses in full-time education and career choices that are available to them once they leave school.

35. In most subjects there is a current scheme of work to support teachers in planning the structure and content of lessons, but in many instances these are out of date. The particular problem in many subjects is a lack of a supportive framework for teachers to use as a basis for setting objectives and designing resources and methods. In geography, for example, the same Key Stage 3 scheme of work is in use now as in 1996 when the school was last inspected. In music there was no scheme of work in place prior to September 2000. This has created considerable problems for the new teacher in this subject.
36. In most subjects there is insufficient use of different targets for attainment for lower, middle and higher attaining pupils to reach within lesson planning and teaching. This has important implications. Pupils are not, in many instances, provided with clear targets to achieve for units of work. They are therefore insufficiently aware of what level of work to aim for, how well they are doing, and what more they have to do to succeed. The marks and comments that pupils receive whilst they are doing their work and the final grade that is awarded once their work is completed are not directly related to the intended outcomes within the scheme of work. This lack of clarity is evident when interviewing pupils about the standards that they are reaching. The relatively vague written personal targets which pupils agree with teachers and tutors relate more to improving attitude and effort than to a planned acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding. In the GCSE business studies course and in the GNVQ manufacturing course some of the above features are in place and are helping pupils to reach high standards. Improvements to schemes of work also need to incorporate more systematic arrangements to ensure continuity of learning between Years 6 and 7 and, where appropriate, between Years 10 and 13. Whilst the need for this is recognised by both senior managers and by subject leaders, it will require more co-ordinated working with partner schools and colleges, with whom good relationships already exist.
37. There are some valuable extra-curricular opportunities, especially in physical education. In recent years the extra-curricular provision for music has been very limited and staff shortages currently restrict the scope for staging dramatic productions. The split lunchtime where pupils in Years 7 and 8 eat at a different time from those in Years 9 to 11 inhibits lunch-time clubs and societies. The extra-curricular provision is therefore less extensive than in many secondary schools.
38. Opportunities for pupils to work in the library or at a computer at lunch times and after school are provided, but these opportunities do not amount to a systematically planned strategy to support and develop pupils' study skills. Given the high level of social disadvantage within the area served by the school and the problems that some pupils face in working at home, there is scope for improving the arrangements for pupils to work at school, with help, outside lessons. The previous inspection

report identifies the need to help pupils to strengthen their skills of independent learning. Although some progress is evident, more work on this is still required.

39. The provision for supporting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. There is a satisfactory level of support for their cultural development. The high standards reported upon in the last inspection have generally been upheld. Pupils gain useful insights into their own values and beliefs and those of other people. They are given scope to reflect, discuss and to explore ideas that relate to the meaning and purpose of life and to guiding principles. Such opportunities occur readily in religious education and personal and social education lessons and in assemblies. They also occur in several other subjects, including English, science, history and business studies. Pupils are successfully taught to distinguish right from wrong within the Christian values of the school. Sex education is taught within the context of family values. Pupils are also encouraged to consider ethical and moral issues within scientific, technological, historical and business environments. The newly introduced citizenship course in Year 10 focuses on some of the moral dilemmas to be resolved in modern society, such as anger within the family.
40. Within lessons there are some opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, show initiative and develop leadership skills. These opportunities occur in group-work in personal and social education and in team playing in physical education, for example. However, these opportunities are not frequent or extensive enough in many subjects. Some pupils accept a high level of personal responsibility by acting as prefects, but overall there is a need to offer the majority of pupils more chance to exercise responsibility in activities outside lessons too. The strong sense of community within the school coupled with close attention to pupils' welfare encourages pupils to develop positive social skills and attitudes. This is readily apparent in the considerate way in which most pupils work with others and respect racial and religious differences. The advantages of having a school with a rich tradition of cultures represented within it have not, however, been fully exploited. Similarly the cultural opportunities provided within the City of Birmingham have not been used to any great extent to enrich the curriculum. Opportunities have been missed in art and music, for example, to use artists in residence, to attend concerts and to visit galleries.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection and first aid, are good. The procedures for dealing with child protection issues are very clear and all staff are made aware of them. There are good arrangements in place for first aid and the administration of medicines in school. The recording of accidents is consistent and appropriate. The school makes effective use of the school nurse and the health authority to ensure that staff are well informed, for example about how to administer emergency first aid for pupils with severe allergies. There are appropriate policies in place for health and safety. However, although regular health and safety checks are carried out, they are not documented, which is a weakness. Risk assessment has been carried out thoroughly in science but this is not consistent throughout the school. The school is aware of a several minor health and safety issues (identified in the science, design & technology and physical education sections of this report) which are being

monitored. Health and safety issues identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed effectively.

Academic monitoring

42. The current arrangements for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3. The core of the problem lies with the general lack of defined targets for attainment within lesson plans and schemes of work. As a consequence pupils are not sufficiently aware of what standard of work to aim for, and what they need to do to reach ambitious personal learning targets. Each pupil meets on a regular basis with a review tutor. They jointly consider the pupils' academic progress and steps towards improvement. However, the lack of clear and detailed academic attainment data to support this process means that targets set are often of a very general nature and, on the whole, pupils do not value the process as highly as they might.
43. Marks and comments provided by subject teachers are frequently encouraging and offer help with presentation and points of detail, but do not always give pupils a sufficiently clear picture of how well they are progressing. Marks and grades from school-based tests and assignments are carefully recorded by subject teachers and are often helpful as a means of confirming how pupils are performing in relation to the expectations of the teacher. However, these marks and grades are not always linked to standardised level descriptions, which makes it difficult to compare the performance of pupils across the curriculum or over time with sufficient precision. Whilst some helpful records of pupils' standardised test scores are kept on an electronic file, teachers do not yet make sufficient use of these to identify pupils' target grades or to check whether individuals are making sufficient progress. Further work also needs to be done to monitor the progress of pupils from different groups, including ethnic groups. This is particularly important given the very wide variations between the attainment patterns of different groups. At Key Stage 4 several subjects make good use of predicted GCSE grades in order to provide support and guidance for pupils who are perceived to be at risk of not meeting their intended levels of attainment.
44. The school has a number of systems in place or in the planning stage that could lead to significant improvements in the quality of assessment over the next two years. These are set out in the school's development plan, and relate to the setting of clearer targets for attainment for pupils of differing abilities; more diagnostic marking approaches; improved central records; the use of grades that are standardised across subjects and better use of data to predict pupils' capabilities. The need to move ahead quickly on these areas is very apparent. Where personal learning targets have been accurately defined and used within lessons, attainment levels have risen. This is evident in mathematics, business studies, modern foreign languages, physical education and GNVQ manufacturing. Pupils in these subject areas, especially at Key Stage 4, have benefited from having a clear view of what was expected of them so that they could play a more substantial part in their own learning. In several subject areas, pupils' own comments about how they could improve are relatively unstructured and imprecise, with an emphasis on trying harder without the insight that they need into what 'harder' actually means in terms of gaining new skills, concepts and knowledge.

45. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning currently has a number of weaknesses as a consequence of the shortcomings within the overall assessment arrangements. These include using performance data to help pupils select their key stage options, using evidence of attainment levels to place pupils within ability sets and the use of accurate predictions of GCSE performance to identify the most appropriate tier of examination to enter the pupils for. The lack of precision within the individual education plans for some pupils on the register of special educational needs has led to shortcomings in the curriculum support provided for them. However, the improvements in examination results in 2000 have been partially brought about by teachers being able to identify and meet the specific learning needs of pupils using the results of 'mock' examinations, and from conclusions drawn from the analysis of past examination results.
46. The previous inspection report identified a number of potential strengths in the area of whole-school assessment. These still exist in parts of the school. However, developments have not been sufficiently well co-ordinated by senior managers to ensure that the best practice is emulated across the whole school. This deficiency has been recognised. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed with specific responsibility to improve assessment practice and draft policies already indicate a more coherent approach is being developed.

Monitoring personal development

47. The school has satisfactory systems in place for monitoring pupils' personal development. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge sensitively to guide and help pupils. Each pupil has a form tutor and a review tutor, both of whom monitor pupils' attitude to work. Form tutors teach the programme of personal and social education and this enables them to monitor the on-going personal development of pupils informally. Review tutors periodically discuss pupils' progress across the school. The focus of these reviews is on academic progress but tutors also help pupils in learning to organise their work.
48. The school has appropriate measures in place to promote the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality and was successful in raising levels of attendance in the last academic year. The school has recently been rigorous in insisting that all parents intending to take term-time holidays apply in writing, in advance. The targets for attendance for the current year are realistic. Since Easter, as part of the *Excellence in Cities* project, the school has made contact with home on the first day of a pupil's absence: this has resulted in a small but significant improvement in attendance. Pupils are rewarded for full attendance and the school is now usefully beginning to issue certificates for improved attendance. Attendance data is regularly shared with pupils in form time. Lateness is effectively monitored and leads to detention. However, the levels of lateness remain high.
49. The school has appropriate systems in place to promote good behaviour and to monitor pupils' behaviour. However, the merit system for promoting good behaviour is not generally valued by pupils and this limits its effectiveness. The report system for unacceptable behaviour is well understood by pupils and implemented with a good level of consistency by the permanent teachers.

50. The school makes good use of additional adults and other resources to support pupils' development. Parents are appropriately involved in cases of serious or persistent poor behaviour. The school makes very good use of a visiting mentor who works with a small group of African-Caribbean pupils as part of an initiative to improve self-esteem, academic expectations and motivation. Another recently-appointed school-based mentor supports a programme addressing issues including attendance, relationships and aspirations. Plans to establish a learning support centre are well advanced. This will enable pupils who have not responded to the usual disciplinary measures to be supported within school, rather than facing exclusion. The school has been instrumental in establishing the Zacchaeus pre-exclusion centre jointly with partner Roman Catholic secondary schools in the city. This works very effectively to support pupils off-site for fixed periods before helping them reintegrate into school. These measures are a reflection of the school's long-standing commitment to inclusivity, avoiding permanent exclusion whenever possible.
51. The school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 provide a pupil support service for younger pupils who are experiencing bullying. The school works hard and with considerable success to promote racial tolerance and understanding. Any incidents of racism are taken very seriously and recorded appropriately.

Pupils with special educational needs

52. There are established systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs. The individual education plans for the few pupils with a full statement of special educational need are of good quality and provide clear guidance promoting progress. The statutory requirements of the statements of special educational need are met. The monitoring and review of statements is effective and parents are involved appropriately. However, the targets in some plans for pupils at earlier stages of the Code of Practice are imprecise and not sufficiently well focused. The number of staff dedicated to supporting pupils with special educational needs is very small and the monitoring of pupils' progress against individual education plan targets is too infrequent and insufficiently detailed. Senior staff indicate that it is extremely difficult to secure statemented support even for the most needy pupils.

Pupils for whom English is an additional language

53. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very high. However, many of these are fluent users of English and work happily alongside their peers without additional support. The amount of language support available is limited but is generally appropriately targeted towards those who need most help. The quality of this support is generally good and contributes to ensuring that no pupils are denied access to learning because of poor English.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Parents and carers are generally supportive of the school. Responses to the OFSTED inspection questionnaire and attendance at the meeting for inspectors to hear parents' views were both very limited. Almost all parents responding to this consultation state that their child likes school, is expected to work hard and is

making good progress. Most parents would feel comfortable to approach the school if they had concerns. However, a significant number believed they were not well informed about the progress their child was making.

55. Inspection evidence supports the parents' positive views of the school. However, there is also evidence to bear out parents' concerns. Parents are not consistently well informed about the progress their child is making. Progress reports are provided annually and the school works hard to ensure that parents are informed and involved over matters of behaviour and attendance. However, little information about what pupils will be studying over the coming weeks is sent home.
56. The school provides a variety of information for parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors between them provide most of the information required but each has minor omissions. The prospectus fails to provide details of the charging policy and the curriculum information excludes ICT. The annual report of governors does not provide sufficient detail about staff training, progress on the OFSTED action plans, governing body meetings or special educational needs. For example, details of changes in provision for special educational needs are unclear.
57. The quality of the pupils' annual progress reports was criticised in the previous inspection report for providing too much detail. The school has successfully addressed this issue. However, in their current form, reports do not meet statutory requirements. The report on personal and social education is generally inadequate and reports on ICT are absent. The current method of reporting basic skills is confusing but is under review. In too many cases, subject reports do not provide sufficient information about the work covered or details of progress. Too frequently comments relate mainly to attitude and effort. Strengths and weaknesses are not consistently identified and, when targets are set, they are rarely sufficiently precise to guide future learning effectively.
58. The school has made a number of efforts to involve parents in the school community but these have been met with little enthusiasm. For example, attempts to establish a parent teacher association have been unsuccessful. Attendance at school concerts and productions and at some consultation evenings is disappointing. The school makes commendable efforts to counteract the low attendance by contacting parents by telephone and, in some cases, by arranging individual appointments. This ensures that almost all parents are provided with information about their child's progress.
59. Heads of year work hard to establish and maintain good working relationships with parents. Most parents support the school well over disciplinary matters and attendance. The co-ordinator for special educational needs works hard to inform and involve parents in their child's individual education plans, with some success. Targets in individual education plans for those at Stages 3 or 4 of the Code of Practice are too general to enable parents to help their child effectively. However, parents of both pupils with full statements of special educational needs are actively involved in the review process. The school has a home-school liaison tutor who provides a flexible and valuable service, making contact with parents from the Vietnamese community and providing translation and interpreting services.

Another mentor supports African-Caribbean families in their contact with school and helps parents become more directly involved with their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The headteacher and senior managers have successfully maintained the strengths identified at the time of the last inspection. They continue to place a high priority on establishing and maintaining close and effective working relationships between all members of the school community. This contributes positively to pupils' attitudes and behaviour and to the calm and harmonious atmosphere in school. Recently, there has been increased emphasis upon raising the levels of pupils' attainments and improving further the quality of teaching. Although there are signs of improvement are already evident in both areas, there is further to go with both of these priorities.
61. Senior managers delegate significant areas of responsibility to subject leaders and pastoral co-ordinators, particularly in interpreting whole-school policies. These middle managers, some of whom are relatively inexperienced, generally demonstrate effective leadership skills and manage their teams well. Many have used the opportunities provided to initiate improvements. However, in several important areas, a lack of detail in whole-school policies has led to unhelpful inconsistencies in the way individual teams operate. This applies to the monitoring of teaching, to the assessment and recording of pupils' progress, target setting and to teachers' use of sanctions and rewards. For example, although regular peer observation of teaching is an established practice with teachers of French to good effect, it is not practised in many other departments. The school should now build on the good practice which has developed within specific teams by sharing it more widely across the school and publicising more explicitly expectations of practice in these areas. A start on this has already been made by the newly appointed deputy headteacher charged with the task of strengthening the school's approach to assessment and target setting.
62. The governing body offers valuable support to the work of the school and governors undertake their statutory duties conscientiously. They receive regular reports from both senior managers and from subject leaders about specific aspects of work and have a clear awareness of many of their particular concerns including, for example, the deficiencies in accommodation. Governors approve the school's annual development plan and endorse the emphasis upon raising standards of achievement. The finance committee actively monitors the budget. More generally, however, governors' involvement in strategic planning and in evaluating the quality of provision is little advanced over the position reported in 1996.
63. The school's development plan identifies appropriate aims including raising levels of attainment and improving attendance. A broad range of activities in support of these aims is listed but they are not prioritised and it is not always clear who is responsible for their implementation. This limits the effectiveness of the document in securing concerted whole school action. A useful system of regular subject reviews enables senior managers and subject leaders jointly to monitor the impact of schemes of work on pupils' attainments. They also help to ensure that departmental action plans reflect the priorities of the school development plan more successfully than at the time of the last inspection. As yet these reviews do not

consistently include the observation and monitoring of teaching nor the detailed analysis of patterns of attainment. However, plans are advanced to introduce both of these elements later this term. Such a process is needed to provide a firm foundation for the introduction of a formal performance management system. More generally, evaluation of the impact of whole school policies and initiatives is not yet systematic nor sufficiently rigorous. This means that examples of good practice go unrecognised and are not shared with colleagues. For example, some tutors are much more effective than others in promoting the importance of good attendance. A key issue for the school is to establish more comprehensive, diagnostic evaluation processes involving governors and senior staff. Immediate areas of focus should include the provision of support to pupils with special educational needs and the quality of teaching in Years 8 and 9, looking in particular at the pupil management skills of newly appointed teachers.

64. The school makes good use of the resources it has. Budget planning is closely linked to the development plan. Professional training grants are administered carefully to meet needs identified through subject reviews. Grants associated with recent initiatives such as the *National Grid for Learning* and *Excellence in Cities* are targeted appropriately to improve resources and opportunities for pupils. The finances are controlled in a proper manner and day-to-day management is of a high order. A planned overspend last year has been accommodated in the current budget. The principles of best value are applied well to the provision of supplies and services but now need also to be applied to global budget decisions. In particular, governors and senior staff should evaluate carefully the impact of the policy of maintaining higher than average numbers of teachers. Whilst this has the benefit of securing smaller groups which contributes to the overall quality of teaching, it restricts the budget available for learning resources and teaching assistants, both of which are in short supply.
65. The school has sufficient numbers of teachers but has had increasing difficulty in attracting well-qualified and appropriately experienced staff to fill recent vacancies. Parents have expressed concern that this has had a detrimental impact upon learning. Whilst the school has worked hard to minimise these effects, the use of temporary staff has led to disjointed teaching for some classes. This has had the most serious impact in music where the school was unable to attract a suitable full-time permanent member of staff throughout last year. It also means that the school has a high number of inexperienced staff. Some of these are still establishing effective relationships with some of their classes and this contributed to the problems of unsatisfactory behaviour observed in a relatively high proportion of Year 8 and Year 9 classes. Senior staff continually seek ways to improve recruitment, most successfully through close working with initial teacher training institutions. A calculated strategy to retain experienced staff is to manage the stress on individual teachers. As part of this, the average number of lessons which each teacher teaches is less than the average for similar sized schools nationally. The flexibility which this provides helpfully reduces the number of short term supply teachers required to cover for colleagues who are necessarily out of school on professional business, for example in-service training. Senior managers believe it has also helped to secure a low rate of absence generally amongst staff.
66. The school is effectively supported by hard working and well qualified ancillary staff who provide administrative, technical, catering and site management services.

A part-time qualified librarian helps to maintain an ageing suite of computers as well as the school's small stock of library books. The school makes good use of specialists to provide support to pupils and families from the African-Caribbean and Vietnamese communities. There is a very small number of teachers and teaching assistants providing focused support for pupils with special educational needs. This means that nearly all specialised support has to come from class teachers and whilst this works well in some areas, for example, in geography and in modern foreign languages, in others it is often insufficient.

67. The provision of teaching resources in some areas has been improved over that reported in 1996. However, there are still significant shortages which limit teaching and learning opportunities. The number of computer systems available for pupils to use is still low although the infrastructure has been laid to link many more together around the school over the coming months. The stock of books in the library remains low, having been significantly reduced by a flood last term. It needs significant investment if it is to support the aim of encouraging more independent learning by pupils. There are still shortages of equipment to support pupils' learning in science, geography and music.
68. Many of the problems with accommodation evident at the time of the last inspection remain unresolved. Outside play space is very limited and the sports fields are too distant from the school to be used for recreation at breaks and lunch-times. The dining room is very small for the number of diners. Many teaching rooms are cramped and in need of redecoration. Much of the furniture is worn. The most seriously affected areas, where conditions significantly restrict the range and quality of the curriculum, are science, music and physical education. It is difficult to see how pupils can achieve of their best in these subjects until these constraints are removed. A medium and longer term plan to improve these facilities should be an urgent priority for governors.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to continue to improve standards and the quality of education in the school, governors and senior managers should plan to address the following key issues.

- i. Address deficiencies in the provision and use of ICT by:
 - continuing with the programme of up-dating and increasing the number of computer systems available for pupils to use;
 - planning carefully to ensure that all pupils receive their full entitlement to the statutory programmes of study for ICT in all years;
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in all subjects.

[see paragraphs 138-144]; [this key issue is reflected in the school's development plan]

- ii. Develop medium and long term plans, in conjunction with appropriate partners, to improve the sufficiency and quality of accommodation, particularly to alleviate the constraints currently imposed on the teaching of science, music and physical education.

[see paragraphs 68, 103, 164, 173]; [aspects of this key issue are identified in the school's development plan]

- iii. Improve the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress by:
 - agreeing a detailed, whole-school assessment policy which promotes appropriate consistency of practice across the school;
 - sharpening the use of short, medium and long term targets with pupils to improve learning and motivation;
 - extending the use of attainment data for monitoring pupils' progress and for evaluating the quality of provision within subjects and across the school.
[see paragraphs 27, 35, 42-46]; [this key issue is reflected in the school's development plan]

- iv. Improve the processes of evaluation through which governors and senior staff scrutinise the impact of whole-school policies and initiatives. An early focus for this should be the quality of teaching in Years 8 and 9, especially amongst new and inexperienced staff, to ensure that current difficulties are remedied as quickly as possible.
[see paragraphs: 63, 21]

- v. Sharpen the focus of individual education plans and increase the extent of support available to assist pupils with special educational needs so that these pupils make at least as good rates of progress as their peers.
[see paragraphs 30, 52]

In addition to these key issues above, governors and senior staff should also consider attending to the following matters when drawing up their action plan:

- i. Improve the quality and consistency of homework. *[see paragraph 26]*
- ii. Review the provision of, and access to, courses in Key Stage 4 to maximise equality of opportunity. *[see paragraph 33]*
- iii. Continue to improve support within school for pupils to work independently outside lessons. *[see paragraph 38]*
- iv. Include ICT in progress reports to parents. *[see paragraph 57]*
- v. Continue to improve the provision of resources to support learning across the school, particularly in the library. *[see paragraph 67]*

Governors and senior staff should also attend to the following health and safety issues identified in the report:

- provide eye wash stations in science laboratories;
- ensure emergency stop buttons are installed on machinery in the design & technology rooms;
- improve floor markings to indicate safe working areas in the design & technology rooms;
- attend to the hazardous uneven surfaces on hard play areas.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 142 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 86 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 6 | 12 | 46 | 29 | 8 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 635 | N/A |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 242 | N/A |

| Special educational needs | Y7 – Y11 | Sixth form |
|---|----------|------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 2 | N/A |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 193 | N/A |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 231 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 9 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 36 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 9.7 |
| National comparative data | 7.9 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.1 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 1999 | 59 | 56 | 115 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|----------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 30 | 27 | 24 |
| | Girls | 38 | 18 | 25 |
| | Total | 68 | 45 | 49 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 59 (48) | 39 (34) | 43 (43) |
| | National | 63 (65) | 62 (59) | 55 (56) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 9 | 16 | 8 |
| | National | 28 (35) | 38 (44) | 23 (27) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 21 | 30 | 27 |
| | Girls | 25 | 24 | 27 |
| | Total | 46 | 54 | 54 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above | School | 40 (23) | 47 (56) | 47 (51) |
| | National | 64 (62) | 64 (63) | 60 (62) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above | School | 13 | 23 | 11 |
| | National | 31 (30) | 37 (37) | 28 (30) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (ie 1998).

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year | 1999 | 71 | 49 | 120 |

| 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 | 8 | 62 | 68 |
| | Girls | 19 | 45 | 49 |
| | Total | 27 | 107 | 117 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 23 (25) | 89 (88) | 98 (95) |
| | National | 48 (46) | 88 (88) | 94 (93) |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year (ie 1998).

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 29.8 (29.1) |
| | National | 38.0 (37.0) |

| Vocational qualifications | Number | % success rate |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | n/a |
| | National | 82.5 |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 190 |
| Black – African heritage | 4 |
| Black – other | 6 |
| Asian-Indian | 158 |
| Pakistani | 18 |
| Bangladeshi | 7 |
| Chinese | 5 |
| White | 137 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 89 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 4 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 2 | 0 |
| Asian-Indian | 1 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 7 | 0 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 1 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 40.8 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 15.6 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 3.2 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 118 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 75.9 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 22.6 |
| Key Stage 4 | 18.8 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 1763481 |
| Total expenditure | 1744157 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2747 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -11030 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 8294 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 650 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 112 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 47 | 45 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 54 | 38 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 47 | 35 | 15 | 2 | 2 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 27 | 55 | 9 | 7 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 38 | 46 | 11 | 2 | 4 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 35 | 42 | 15 | 9 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 43 | 47 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 65 | 24 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 20 | 52 | 14 | 4 | 11 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 25 | 45 | 5 | 5 | 18 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 29 | 57 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 29 | 36 | 20 | 7 | 9 |

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

69. The majority of parents who expressed a view were positive about many aspects of the school including standards of behaviour and the quality of teaching. They believe teachers work hard to get the best out of their children. A significant minority felt that information about progress and the range of extra-curricular activities could both be improved.

Other issues raised by parents

70. A few parents expressed concern that the turn-over of temporary teachers, particularly in the last year, had had a negative effect on learning and on behaviour in some classes. Inspectors endorse this concern whilst recognising the efforts the school has made to have made to minimise its impact and improve recruitment of permanent teachers.

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

ENGLISH

71. Overall, attainment in English is below the standards expected nationally of pupils in this age range.
72. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below those expected nationally. Over recent years attainment in National Curriculum tests has been below national averages but has been well above the attainment in schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds. While the numbers of pupils attaining the expected level is close to that found nationally, the numbers of pupils attaining higher levels is well below the national average. In the lessons observed, pupils' attainments were typically close to that reflected in the recent National Curriculum test results, though there were examples of higher standards being attained by more able pupils.
73. Standards in Key Stage 4 are below what is expected nationally. Between 1997 and 2000 the school's examination results in English have, however, risen significantly and are now close to national averages. In English language 54% of pupils obtained grades A* to C this year compared to a national average of over 55%. However, the proportion of pupils attaining higher grades is considerably lower than the national average. Results in English literature, while improved, are below this level with the percentage of pupils achieving higher levels below national averages. Results in drama too are below national averages.
74. Over recent years girls obtained significantly better results than boys. In the current year however, boys' results have shown improvement and are now much closer to those of girls in English language. Boys' results in English literature are still significantly lower than those of girls, compared with the difference found nationally. There are significant differences in examination performance between groups of pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds. Pupils from Asian-Indian and other Asian heritages achieved significantly better in GCSE results than other groups.
75. Standards of work in Key Stage 4 observed during the week of the inspection were generally below those found nationally. However, pupils' attainment in some lessons was considerably higher than this. Teachers are providing pupils with considerable support in lessons and the school has a higher than average number of pupils who need this support to achieve nationally expected standards.
76. Generally, pupils are confident and competent speakers. In both key stages they are able to recount clearly details from their prior learning and work together effectively in pairs and small groups to extend their thinking and refine ideas. By Key Stage 4, pupils are able to express opinions very effectively, justifying them by reference to evidence. Year 11 pupils studying *Of Mice and Men* were able to describe the interdependence of the two central characters and justify their judgements by reference to the text. The majority of pupils for whom English is an additional language are competent at reading, writing and speaking English. The small number who require additional help to become fluent receive appropriate help and are making good progress with their language work.

77. Pupils are satisfactorily developing their ability as writers. In Key Stage 3, they are writing in a range of different forms: stories, letters, book reviews etc., and developing the concept of writing directed at a clearly defined audience. A Year 8 class drew up part of the school prospectus for Year 6 pupils due to enter the school. They showed a clear sense of the audience for whom the piece was intended and matched the content and style of the writing to it. By Key Stage 4, the majority of pupils are able to write competently, using standard English with few grammatical errors. The most able write extended essays using a width of vocabulary, with detail effectively organised. However, a significant number of pupils have difficulties in writing. These pupils have problems in organising their ideas and they show low standards of spelling and punctuation. Although pupils are aware of the need to plan their work and are familiar with the technique of brainstorming their ideas, many are reluctant planners and perceive drafting over-simply as making neat, corrected copies of their writing. Many pupils are inefficient note takers, making notes in continuous prose.
78. Pupils are competent readers and generally they are coping effectively with their reading materials. In Key Stage 3, pupils can extract relevant detail from texts. By the end of Year 9, they are able to recount the subject matter and story line of the fiction they are studying and have a clear understanding of characterisation. In Key Stage 4, pupils have a firmer understanding of characterisation in literature. They are able to understand character and motive and relate cause and effect. Pupils demonstrated sensitive responses to a range of poetry from the 19th and 20th centuries.
79. The teacher in charge of literacy is currently in the process of developing a new team because of staff leaving at the end of the last academic year. Overall, standards of literacy in all subjects of the curriculum are lower than those expected nationally. There is insufficient extended writing in Key Stage 3. Pupils have under-developed research skills and very little opportunity to use word processing as a way of extending and developing their skills in written English. In some subjects such as geography, effective word banks are compiled to reinforce an understanding of subject-specific terminology. Apart from more able pupils, standards of technical accuracy and presentation are below those expected of pupils of their age.
80. Taking into account that pupils' attainment on entry is significantly below national levels and the improving examination results, progress in English across the school is good. Teachers' methods ensure that those with special educational needs make sound progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of the clear objectives set in lessons and the school policy of focusing extra support on pupils whose oral language is underdeveloped. Since the last inspection in 1996, examination results have risen and are now just below national average. This represents marked improvement since the last inspection.
81. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are attentive, settle quietly to their tasks and generally maintain their involvement and concentration. Pupils are co-operative, very willing to respond to teachers' questions and to work with each other in pairs and groups.

82. Overall, the quality of English teaching is good in both key stages. In over 70% of lessons seen the quality of teaching was judged good or better. This is an improvement over the last inspection. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is better than in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 teaching embraces a wider range of activities as pupils' skills improve and this richer curriculum benefits pupils' progress. All the teachers of English show a good grasp of their material and texts. They use a variety of methods in their lessons, making interesting and useful contributions that hold pupils' attention. Teachers share clear lesson objectives with pupils. Their class management and relationships with pupils are very good and this contributes significantly to the success of lessons. English teachers regularly set appropriate homework which is regularly marked. Where teaching is less successful, pupils are not all being sufficiently challenged and many work at too leisurely a pace to make good progress.
83. Provision for drama is hampered by the lack of a drama specialist within the English department and a drama course is not being offered to Year 10 pupils at GCSE this year. Currently Year 11 GCSE drama is taught effectively by a member of the English team. In the drama observed teaching was of a good standard. The aims were set out clearly and teaching focused on enabling pupils to develop their skills in drama and reflect on their performance.
84. Teachers use their assessments of pupils' responses in lessons to match new learning to their needs. The exception to this is in Year 7 where insufficient use is made of information available about their performance in Year 6 to ensure the most effective progress in their learning as they enter the school. There are numerous examples of marking identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This good practice needs to be more widespread, both within the department and in other subjects.
85. The department is well led. The acting head of department took up the post in September 2000 and has already established a common direction and clear focus for development for the team, many of whom are also recently in post. Tracking of pupils' work is used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to improve lesson planning. The monitoring of teaching through classroom observation is planned. The English development plan is a useful and important document and identifies relevant priorities. These include a corporate planning strategy and the need for the new English National Curriculum to be implemented in all its aspects. The need for professional development among staff of the English department is also recognised.

MATHEMATICS

86. In recent years standards in mathematics have been below the national averages in each key stage. However, they have shown significant improvement over the last two years and are now typically close to expected levels.
87. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are now attaining standards close to those typical for their age. In the 1999 national assessments the percentage of pupils who attained the expected standard of Level 5 or above was well below the national average but in line with those of pupils from similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher standard of Level 6 was well below national averages but close to the average for similar schools. The results available for 2000 show that standards have

improved although still below the 1999 national averages. The general trend over the last four years is of improving standards.

88. Pupils' current work in lessons indicates that attainment by Year 9 pupils in Summer 2001 is likely to be similar to the standards achieved in 2000. For example, pupils in the middle sets in Year 9 are able to calculate percentages such as 25% of 60 and show an understanding of simple ratios and their relationship with percentages.
89. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are attaining standards just below the national average. In the 1999 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils attaining the higher A* to C grades was very low compared to the national average. Girls attained slightly better standards than boys which was similar to the national picture. The percentage of pupils attaining at least a G grade in the GCSE was close to the national average. Pupils do less well in mathematics than they do in the other subjects of the curriculum. The school enters a similar proportion of pupils for the examination to that found nationally. In the 2000 GCSE examination standards have improved significantly to be close to the national average for 1999. Boys in 2000 attained slightly better than girls. Over the last four years the percentage of pupils attaining a grade has improved, however, there has been some fluctuation in the percentage of higher grade passes.
90. From a scrutiny of pupils' current and past work in Key Stage 4 and from talking to pupils currently in Year 11, inspectors judge that standards continue to improve and that a higher proportion of pupils are on course to attain a higher grade pass than last year. For example, pupils in the upper sets in Year 11 are able to solve complex algebra problems involving indices, demonstrating a good understanding of the processes they are using.
91. Standards of numeracy are generally good with mathematics teachers regularly practising basic skills at the start of their lessons. However, there is only very limited contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy in the other subjects of the curriculum. Mathematics teachers ensure that they regularly refer to the appropriate mathematical vocabulary and encourage pupils to develop their use and understanding of technical terms. In this way, mathematics makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
92. Overall, pupils' achievement is good. They are making at least satisfactory progress in their mathematical studies. More able pupils within the setting system, which identifies a high attainment group, are making very good progress. For example, the high attainment group currently in Year 11 have typically progressed from Level 4 in the National Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 2 to Level 6 at the end of Key Stage 3 and to GCSE grade B or C at the end of Year 10. They have a target of Grade A or A* at the end of Year 11. However, pupils in the lower sets and those with special educational needs are only making satisfactory progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress in the upper sets and satisfactory progress in the lower sets. This indicates a secure improvement since the last inspection.
93. Overall, the quality of teaching in mathematics is good. In all, inspectors observed sixteen lessons covering all year groups and attainment levels. Nearly 70% of lessons were judged to be good, a further 25% satisfactory and only one lesson was

judged unsatisfactory. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and use a range of methods to develop pupils' understanding. In the best lessons teachers plan an appropriate range of activities and deliver them briskly to promote good progress. They challenge pupils to work hard at often complex tasks. For example, a Year 8 lower set used isometric paper to make two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional shapes in order to find and investigate the cross-sectional shape and area. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers deliver appropriate lessons but with more limited challenge. In the one unsatisfactory lesson a significant minority of pupils were inattentive and disturbed the learning of the other pupils. The teacher, who was new to the school, was unaware of any whole school approach to manage such behaviour. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection and after some recent staffing difficulties, the department is now staffed by teachers who have a secure mathematical background.

94. The department is well led. Recent programmes to develop schemes of work and monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' written work are having an impact on improving standards. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but there is a lack of consistency between teachers and they do not identify what pupils know and can do or identify clearly enough what they need to do to improve. There are sufficient textbook resources for most pupils although the limited practical equipment reduces the progress made by the least able pupils. The library resources for mathematics are poor and so prevent the development of research approaches within the teaching programme.
95. The mathematics teaching takes place mostly in a suite of four classrooms in the main teaching block. The classrooms are in need of redecoration and some furniture, particularly chairs, are old and in need of replacement. There are few well presented displays of pupils' work to enhance the learning environment. This does not give the image of a vibrant and dynamic subject area to pupils.

SCIENCE

96. Overall, attainment levels in science are below those expected nationally for each key stage. In 1999, 21% of pupils entered for the science double award examination gained grades A* to C compared to the national average of 49%. The results for boys and girls in that year show marked differences: only 15% of boys in the school gained grades A* to C compared to 30% of girls. The proportion of pupils obtaining higher grade GCSE's in science fell over the period 1997 to 1999. However, in 2000 the average success rate in the school for grades A* to C in science has risen to 32% and the gap between boys and girls has narrowed significantly. This represents a clear improvement especially for boys.
97. The pattern in Key Stage 3 is similar. Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 1997 in science were below the national average and in 1998 and 1999 they were well below the national average. However, the 1999 results were very high when compared with results from similar schools.
98. The observation of lessons and study of pupils' work shows that whilst levels of attainment remain below the national average in Years 7 to 9, they are typically close to expected levels in Years 10 and 11. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning through Key Stage 3 and many, particularly the more able,

make good progress in Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 11 showed a good understanding of chemical rates of reaction. Able pupils generally have a good grasp of underlying scientific principles, they reason clearly and both boys and girls answer questions in class confidently. Less able pupils have gaps in their knowledge and their ability to draw conclusions is less well developed. In Year 9, pupils showed an understanding of the mechanisms of heat transfer, the more able could explain in terms of the structure of the materials in use while the less able used more vague descriptions. Year 8 pupils showed a good knowledge of the chemical elements and used periodic tables of the elements they had obtained from the internet. Written work is generally of a satisfactory standard though some pupils take insufficient care with drawings, diagrams and the neat construction of tables of scientific data.

99. Teaching in science is satisfactory with strong features in all years. In nearly half the lessons observed the teaching was good and in a quarter it was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject and plan their lessons effectively. They manage pupils appropriately. Teachers' expectations of pupils is satisfactory in the early years and is good in Years 10 and 11. They set work which is sometimes open-ended to encourage pupils to think for themselves, though at times this can lead to a lack of significant learning with less motivated pupils. Able pupils gain considerably and show they can discuss possible outcomes to practical investigations, hypothesise about the result of changing experimental conditions and show a good knowledge of scientific terminology, facts and concepts.
100. Behaviour in the classroom by pupils in Years 10 and 11 is generally good. They can work co-operatively in small groups, listen well when the teacher is talking and make significant scientific contributions to whole-class discussions. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 show less self-control and are at times lively and rather noisy though they carry out practical work safely and sensibly.
101. At the present time many of the science department policy documents are out of date and there is a need to update and revise them to reflect fully the requirements of the current National Curriculum and to provide more helpful guidance to new and temporary teachers. The acting subject leader is aware of this and a start has been made. A development plan for the department has been drawn up which shows a clear understanding of the improvement priorities and a workable strategy for securing them.
102. Pupils follow a modular science course throughout their time in school. In Years 7, 8 and 9 they are tested at the end of each module. The mark obtained is usefully entered in a review sheet in their exercise book and they are given the opportunity to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. This is a helpful procedure but at the present time there is no formal system for keeping parents informed of their child's progress.
103. Accommodation for teaching science is poor. One laboratory is satisfactory but the remainder of the teaching areas all have defects which limit the range of class experiments which can be attempted. There are also health and safety implications. Fume cupboards have not been inspected for over two years and are inoperable. No laboratories have eye wash stations or protective aprons for class use.

104. Resources within the department, or available elsewhere for departmental use, are poor. There are sufficient textbooks for class use and they are in reasonable condition. Within the department and the school library, however, there are too few books available which can be used as a research resource, as a backup to classroom work or as an aid to extension work for more able pupils. The department has started to use a computer for data logging experiments and group work but the equipment is insufficient to service all the teaching areas.
105. During the last academic year the science department suffered a series of long-term staff absences and many teachers, including non-specialists, were used as replacements. This resulted in a lack of continuity in the teaching of some classes. A scrutiny of exercise books from that time shows that in some instances little homework was done and on occasions was not marked. As a consequence the progress made by some pupils was less than satisfactory. An important priority for the department is to enable these pupils to catch up in the near future.

ART

106. Overall standards of achievement are unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 but good amongst those pupils who take the subject at Key Stage 4. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards of attainment are below national expectations. Drawing from observation lacks rigour, with technical skills often undeveloped. Colour work is unrefined in application and mixing, and collage work lacks both technical skill and exploration of materials. Modelling in clay is technically limited and is an isolated activity, with little opportunity for pupils to build upon their previous experiences. Card construction work lacks skill and imagination with materials. There is only limited evidence of contextual references having any direct influence on the practical activities. Standards of work in sketchbooks are generally poor, the exceptions being that of some girls in Year 9, who apply themselves to the tasks and explore the creative possibilities within the challenges set. Achievements at the end of Key Stage 4 in the GCSE are above national standards for A* to C grades but fewer pupils are entered for art GCSE than in most schools. Girls exceed boys in the number and quality of the high grade passes. Standards of work seen in Year 10 and 11 classes reflect recent GCSE group results. Presentation skills are integrated into each project. Pupils show confident skills in the graphic representation of observed objects and good control in colour work. There is sound evidence of personal enquiry and research informing the content of the work.
107. Since the last inspection the art department has maintained higher than average GCSE passes. Standards of teaching and of attainment at Key Stage 3 are not as high as they were judged to be in 1996. The work in Years 7 and 8 does not build upon pupils' previously learned skills and experiences, and this limits their progress in acquiring new knowledge and understanding. Relationships between staff and pupils remains positive. The specialist accommodation for art is still limited in the quality and provision of furniture, fittings and decoration. The range and quantity of books have improved slightly, mainly through the teacher using personal resources, but the range and quality available in the library are poor. Displays of creative work throughout the school continue to add positively to the prevailing atmosphere, but they need some form of annotation to inform viewers of the learning contexts.

108. The standard of teaching is satisfactory overall, but with some unsatisfactory lessons seen at Key Stage 3. Lessons are adequately planned and resourced, but sometimes there is only limited time for practical activities after over-long introductions. This limits opportunities for adding to pupils' developing knowledge and understanding. Pupils are presented with a range of practical opportunities and are encouraged to work at home. There is surprisingly little work planned which acknowledges the different ethnic origins of the learners. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with the rest of the class. Teaching is particularly effective on a one-to-one basis. A low-key approach to discipline is effective, with good relationships established between the teacher and most pupils. The programmes of study meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for art. The units of study at Key Stage 3 do not focus clearly enough on the development of pupils' skills, knowledge or understanding. Contextual references from a wide variety of times and places are considered within the planning framework, but teachers often fail to use these effectively in their teaching. Assessment of work is diligently carried out for both class and homework, but is often uncritical of the outcome, making it difficult for pupils to set personal targets. The units of study planned for Key Stage 4 pupils, and the assessment of them, conform to what is required by the examination board.
109. Pupils at Key Stage 3 make only limited progress in developing skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject, except in Year 9 where some pupils show a flair for developing colour and pattern. Some boys are particularly inattentive and therefore limited in the progress they make. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have the opportunity to develop approaches to project work within a controlled framework. In this, the best pupils demonstrate good preliminary observation drawing and research skills.
110. The assessment policy is stated as being integral to the teaching and learning process. The criteria and methodology to be used are clearly stated, although in practice, marks and comments are not related to this policy. A good evaluation sheet for pupils' projects has been developed, but is not in current use. There is no evidence available to indicate that monitoring the work of the department, either internally or by senior management, has affected curriculum development. The subject handbook is well presented with clear aims and objectives for the study. It establishes policies for many important aspects of contemporary education but is not used sufficiently to influence the teaching. There is only one teacher responsible for teaching art in the school, making professional discussions difficult, thereby restricting opportunities for critical analysis of the work.
111. The fittings and furniture in the art studio are old and worn and do not enhance the learning environment, which is also in a poor state of decoration. Sinks are small, and storage is limited in the amount available in the open working area. There is no ICT facility within the art department although each class has the opportunity to engage upon a short project in the ICT suite, albeit without a colour printer to record the activity.
112. There are few planned visits to art galleries or museums to extend the experiences of pupils. The opportunity to work with artists in education to develop a broader understanding of the practice of art in society is also limited.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

113. Standards of attainment in design & technology are below national levels in both key stages. By the end of Year 9, teachers' assessment of pupils' work identifies attainment to be below national expectations, by around one level, with boys attaining significantly lower standards than girls. However, the proportion of pupils reaching at least Level 4 has risen significantly each year since 1998. Examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 have also risen steadily during the last three years. However, results for 2000, when 28% of pupils gained a higher (A* to C) grade, are to still below the national average. There is significant variation between the results for different material areas. In 2000, 35% of entrants on the resistant materials course achieved a higher grade A* to C whereas only 14% achieved similar grades in food technology. Overall, girls' attainment is higher than that of boys in Key Stage 4 also.
114. Pupils generally have poorly developed design & technology skills when they arrive in the school. However, they build on these attainments steadily in Key Stage 3. Although attainment remains below nationally expected levels, pupils achieve well in lessons. They gain a growing awareness of aspects of designing, although a ready fluency with the design process as a whole is not yet well developed. Observations in Key Stage 4 confirm that most pupils continue to work at levels below the average nationally but their progress is good and by Year 11 many are reaching expected levels. Evidence indicates that practical work is better developed than designing although no practical work was observed during the inspection. The current general level of graphicacy at both key stages is low. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in all years, aided by positive teacher support, but the most able pupils are not reaching their full potential.
115. Pupils' learning is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils can co-operate well and in many lessons social harmony has a positive effect on standards. Many pupils produce coursework of a good standard in Year 11 and whilst making sound progress within lessons, progress over Years 10 and 11 for most pupils is lower than expected, partly due to an inadequate grounding in designing and making skills from their Key Stage 3 course. Pupils generally utilise key competencies of reading and writing soundly but many lack confidence in applying these skills. Pupils exhibit good listening skills but show a reluctance to provide extended responses to questions or to speak out without preparation. Although the department has access to a small, old suite of computer systems, the use of ICT to support pupils in the designing process, or in the presentation of ideas, is under-developed.
116. During the last three years the department has responded both to a new National Curriculum order and a new suite of GCSE courses. A period of relative stability in the curriculum is enabling them to focus more explicitly on other developments. There has been an overall improvement in departmental coherence. Strategies are now in place to monitor pupils' progress across different material areas but these are not applied consistently and the outcomes are not yet sufficiently well shared by teachers teaching in different material areas. Systems for monitoring teaching are developing and contributing to the gradual rise in standards. The department has moved forward satisfactorily since the previous inspection.

117. Teaching is variable but satisfactory overall and has a positive impact on standards. No teaching observed was less than satisfactory. Staff have good knowledge of their specialist subject areas, discipline is well maintained and there is good use of technical vocabulary. Generous use of praise and humour together with obvious respect for, and trust in, pupils is evident. Some lessons fail to fully motivate and stretch all pupils and detailed lesson planning with clear, shared objectives is not a consistent feature.
118. Assessment strategies need further refinement in order to improve standards. Marking is generally supportive but does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve. Success criteria are not regularly shared with pupils and this restricts opportunities for them to make judgements about their own learning. At Key Stage 3 assessment is too subjective and teachers do not share their judgements in sufficient detail with pupils. At Key Stage 4 assessment practices are better. Pupils have targets, can identify the grade to which they are working but frequently cannot indicate how they might improve.
119. The subject leader has clear vision and understanding of both what the department does well and those areas in need of development. Further work is needed to support teachers' lesson planning to ensure continuity and progression in core skills across all material areas.
120. There are only four full time members of staff who are suitably qualified and deployed to teach the subject. Most have other senior responsibilities within the school, limiting delegation of departmental roles. Staff from other areas supplement teaching well. Staffing restrictions, together with timetable constraints, are impeding continuity and equality of opportunity in Key Stage 3 and restricting access to courses at Key Stage 4, most specifically in food and textiles. Technician support whilst of good quality is currently limited. This results in teaching staff having to spend time preparing and set up resources.
121. Overall resourcing is barely adequate to cover the curriculum on offer. Accommodation is at least sound but restricted in capacity. The resistant materials/graphics area is open-plan and this can cause disruption to some lessons due to noise transfer. There is no specialist textiles facility which limits pupils work in this area. There is only a limited range of hand and machine tools. This restricts teaching and learning opportunities although creative lesson planning enables all pupils to perform practical work in turn. Textbooks to cover new Key Stage 4 courses have been recently purchased although books in general are in short supply with a particular paucity of reference materials in the library. There are a large number and range of elderly computers situated within the department which are not yet fully integrated into the work of the department. The workshop area has no floor marking to indicate safe working areas around machinery and the absence of stop buttons means some machinery fails to meet safety requirements.

GEOGRAPHY

122. Standards of attainment in geography are generally below those achieved nationally but have improved since the last inspection.

123. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is below national expectations, but has improved since the last inspection. This is due to significant improvements in the attainment of girls. Statutory teacher assessments for 2000 show that 55% of girls reached National Curriculum Level 5 by the end of Year 9, compared to 32% of boys. This is a wider gap than is generally found nationally. No pupils were judged to be at Levels 7 and 8, and the percentage of pupils at Level 6 was well below the national average. The gap in attainment between boys and girls in Key Stage 3 has widened since the last inspection.
124. Attainment by the end of Year 11 improved until 1999 when 50% of the pupils entered for the GCSE examination attained grades A* to C compared to 53% nationally. This was due primarily to sustained improvement in the performance of girls, with 64% of girls attaining a grade A* to C grade compared to 20% of boys. However, in the 2000 GCSE geography examination the performance of girls was weak. Only 20% of girls attained a higher grade, compared to 35% of boys. Compared to previous years there was weaker attainment in the 2000 GCSE examination from pupils with Asian-Indian ethnicity, and this was contrary to school predictions. Several girls entered for the higher tier GCSE geography examination also performed below expectations. The attainment of African-Caribbean pupils, particularly boys, was not as strong as the attainment of pupils from other ethnic groups.
125. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning through all years. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have a good understanding of geographical terms and vocabulary. Pupils generally have secure knowledge of place as a result of teachers' emphasis in their planning. Pupils of all abilities have good opportunities to discuss geographical ideas and most are able to do so confidently. Low attaining pupils achieve well in lessons, and the use of literacy support strategies help them with writing, spelling and reading. More able pupils achieve below their capability. Some lessons observed in Years 7 to 9 did not present more able pupils with enough challenge, and the pace of the lesson was too slow for them. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 discuss geographical patterns and processes confidently and have a good understanding of geographical concepts. Some pupils use ICT effectively in geography lessons but some classes do not make as much use of ICT as the National Curriculum requires due to the lack of access to computer systems. Insufficient library and ICT resources limit pupils' opportunity for research and independent study.
126. The quality of geography teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Lesson aims are routinely shared with pupils. The best teaching is characterised by thorough lesson planning, good relationships between teachers and pupils, firm discipline, the creative use of resources, good pace and high expectations. Low attaining pupils are well supported and the use of literacy support strategies is effective in helping them to make good progress. Higher attaining pupils are not always extended, and this is particularly so in Years 8 and 9. Assessment procedures are inconsistently applied. There are inconsistencies in the amount and quality of marking, particularly notable at Key Stage 4. Lower and middle-attaining pupils find it difficult to understand the assessment codes currently used by geography teachers, and they find it difficult to know how to make better progress. Geography teachers need to make better use of assessment and data on pupils' performance to identify underachievement and target actions. There is

currently no systematic programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. Hence the very good practice present is not being routinely shared. This contributes to the lack of success in extending the most able pupils.

127. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in geography lessons are good. They are nearly always at least satisfactory and are often very good. Behaviour is generally well managed. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to discuss ideas and to open-ended questioning. The department's increasing use of techniques to develop thinking skills motivates pupils as does the use of ICT in Year 9. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to work in pairs or groups, which they enjoy. In Years 10 and 11, pupils show greater interest, concentration and increasing independence as learners.
128. An experienced and committed teacher leads the geography department. He has significant pastoral responsibilities in the school and this has a detrimental impact on his available time for departmental management. Department funds are used effectively, and a development plan sets priorities for the future. Departmental development planning has improved since the last inspection, but the use of data on pupils' performance to inform planning is weak. There is no clear understanding in the department of trends over time in pupils' performance, performance by gender or value added measures of performance. Few changes have taken place in Key Stage 3 curriculum planning despite criticisms of it at the last inspection. Key Stage 4 curriculum planning has improved and is satisfactory overall. The deployment of teachers to teaching groups is generally good but a non-specialist has inappropriately been time-tabled to teach an extension group. Teachers in the department are professional and hard working. The subject leader provides very good and effective day to day support for them. A good professional atmosphere is evident.
129. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the number of textbooks in the department, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9. There are still insufficient textbooks for Years 10 and 11, and pupils often have to share textbooks or use photocopied pages. Book stock in the library is limited and not well matched to curriculum coverage. The amount of modern computer hardware and software available to the department is unsatisfactory.

HISTORY

130. Standards of achievement overall in history are below national expectations in both Key Stages. Pupils' historical knowledge on entry is generally weak. Significant staffing difficulties over the last two years have resulted in some pupils not covering sufficient curriculum content nor making sufficient progress in the development of their historical skills. Recent changes mean that progress overall is now satisfactory and is good in many lessons. The more-able pupils make better progress than the less able. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is below national norms but is very variable, with standards ranging from Level 2 (well below national expectations) up to a small number of pupils working at Level 6 (just above national expectations). There appears to be a direct correlation between those who have made least progress and those who have experienced disruption in their teaching.
131. In 2000, 38% of pupils who took GCSE history achieved a higher grade A* to C. This is well below the figures predicted by the school (52%) and below the national

average in recent years. However, pupils taking the history examination generally did better in this subject than in others. African-Caribbean and white boys do least well. There are very few A and B grades. In lessons in Years 10 and 11 pupils are making good progress and, in most lessons, are working at levels close to those expected for pupils of this age.

132. Pupils are good orally. They enjoy contributing to class discussion and putting forward simple hypotheses. They are less confident when writing, particularly in Key Stage 3. The use of writing frames, dictionaries, key words and glossaries aid the development of their literacy skills. Pupils' ability to appreciate sources and their validity is variable, but improving, as is their ability to understand chronology and the links between events in the past. Pupils do little to further numeracy or ICT skills in history lessons although developments to improve this are reflected in new schemes of work.
133. Since the previous inspection, there has been limited improvement within the department. Standards remain below national expectations, particularly at Key Stage 3. GCSE results have not improved significantly. There has been a recent, very positive emphasis by new staff on developing the historical skills of pupils. This initiative is in its infancy, but is already having a positive impact. Pupils can extract information from sources provided and the most able are beginning to develop some limited ability to appreciate historical interpretation. The skill of independent research remains under-developed. The use of some diagnostic commentary in day-to-day marking is a recent and valued new feature in pupils' books. The use of long term, on-going assessment, together with meaningful targets for each pupil's improvement, is inadequate but developments are currently being planned. Statutory requirements are now met in the new schemes of work. Resources within the department have not improved since the last inspection and the insufficient library provision has hindered research opportunities. The inadequate supply of appropriate resources is inhibiting the drive to improve standards.
134. The department is now managed by an acting head of department who, though inexperienced, is very committed and able. She has worked with the other history teachers to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the department and identify priorities for action. This analysis is very accurate and useful and provides the department with a clear vision for the way ahead.
135. Teaching at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. The best teaching is characterised by very good planning, the sharing of lesson aims with pupils and an effective review at the end of the lesson to clarify what has been learned. Teachers make good use of time and plan lessons to ensure that a variety of tasks are given. Stimulating discussions are a feature of all good lessons, such as when pupils in Year 11 explained hyper-inflation and appreciated its impact on lives in post-World War I Germany. Year 9 pupils showed empathy in their discussions of the power of propaganda posters on recruitment into the army. Although lessons are challenging for pupils, they are insufficiently differentiated in order to ensure all pupils can make appropriate progress. In particular, less able pupils in Years 7 to 9 make only slow progress, partly because of too little support for their particular needs. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, it was related to the inability of the teacher to manage the behaviour of some disruptive pupils.

136. Pupils demonstrate an interest in history, are keen to enquire and work effectively together and with their teachers. They almost always behave well and demonstrate good relationships with each other. Most pupils respect the knowledge and skill of their teachers and appreciate their commitment. Behaviour is almost always sound except occasionally when pupils are frustrated at not being able to understand the work set. The vast majority of pupils are not confident in working independently and are heavily reliant on their teachers for step-by-step guidance.
137. The history curriculum offers a range of opportunities to develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils. An example, seen in Year 8, required pupils to consider the rights and wrongs of Charles I's actions. The choice of some units of work, including studies of India and Ireland and the black peoples of America, offers opportunities to develop moral and social perspectives. This provision has not been planned systematically but is becoming a feature of the new schemes of work. The progress made by the new staff in producing departmental documentation to aid consistency and continuity in lesson planning is incomplete but impressive. Senior managers have conducted a subject review which reinforces the areas for development identified in the department. Links to the senior team are currently informal and require more focus to ensure appropriate support is given, particularly to the new and relatively inexperienced head of department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

138. The school is not offering a satisfactory quality of education for all its pupils in ICT and standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are below national expectations.
139. Pupils in Year 7 acquire basic knowledge and skills, appropriate for pupils of this age, through a short ICT course. This is the only time-tabled National Curriculum ICT course. Pupils make good progress during these lessons. However, there is insufficient opportunity for the skills they gain to be practised and extended in other subjects and in later years. Isolated examples of good ICT use to support other subjects are present. For example, during Year 8 some pupils develop their ICT capability as they research the internet for information on chemical elements to support their learning in science. In Year 9 pupils learn to use ICT in geography to handle two documents simultaneously as they extract relevant information from a source document and incorporate it into their own work. However pupils' total experience of ICT is insufficient to meet National Curriculum requirements. Their progress, although good in Year 7, is unsatisfactory over Key Stage 3 as a whole. As a result, attainment in all aspects of ICT is below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3.
140. At Key Stage 4 there is neither a core ICT course for all pupils nor a GCSE option course. Whilst there are examples of sound ICT use in design & technology and in geography projects, provision across the rest of the curriculum is patchy and inconsistent. A small number of pupils follow a short module during Year 11 which leads to a basic certificate of competence (CLAIT). These experiences are not well planned and do not broaden pupils' ICT capability. Some pupils in Year 11 repeat work already covered in Year 10. The school does not deliver the statutory requirement for ICT to Key Stage 4 pupils and their progress in learning through

these years is unsatisfactory. Following an impoverished curriculum at Key Stage 3, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is well below national expectations.

141. In the relatively few specialist lessons in the subject, teaching is good. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the subject and an understanding of how best to teach it to pupils. A range of teaching strategies is employed with a good balance between exposition, demonstration and individual work. ICT techniques are used effectively to enhance teaching with excellent use being made of an interactive whiteboard. Lessons are well prepared with clear learning objectives and are conducted at a brisk pace. Tasks are set which enable pupils to achieve these objectives within meaningful contexts and, in several lessons observed, valuable contributions were made to developing pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and promoting personal development. For example, in a Year 7 lesson pupils developed word-processing skills using prepared texts of Aesop's fables. In addition to all pupils learning about the limitations of spell-checkers, volunteers were chosen to read aloud and pupils were encouraged to discuss the moral of the tale. In another lesson, after editing a text each pupil's work was printed and checked by another pupil. During this short activity the teacher encouraged pupils to calculate mentally their percentage accuracy.
142. Teachers in the ICT courses make every effort to get to know their students well and strike a good balance between intervention and the development of independent learning. When pupils are working individually, teachers provide sensitive support enabling pupils to progress at their own pace but preventing them from floundering unproductively. The availability of the ICT co-ordinator to provide additional classroom support for both teachers and pupils is valued and well used. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good-humoured and mutually respectful. However, assessment of learning is a weakness, and pupils' progress in ICT is not reported to parents. Strategies to allow teachers to judge the effectiveness of their teaching are not in place and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to be informed of how well they are developing.
143. The school's limited ICT resources are well managed. The specialist ICT room provides a pleasant learning environment and the resourcing within this room is adequate both in quality and quantity for one class. The small number of specialist ICT lessons currently allows some use of this room by teachers of other subject. However, as the ICT curriculum develops to meet statutory requirements, the pressure on existing resources will become critical. In addition the ICT resources available within all departments need improving. There is insufficient specialist ICT equipment for music, art and science. Governors and senior staff are well aware of the deficiencies and have committed resources from the school's budget as well as from the *National Grid for Learning* initiative to improve the situation steadily over coming months and years.
144. As part of the drive to improve the use of ICT across the school, an ICT specialist is time-tabled to work alongside teachers from other departments supporting the use of ICT in their subject areas. This is helping to ensure that increasing numbers of teachers are taking up opportunities to use new equipment and resources, such as inter active white boards, in their teaching. This is having a beneficial, though currently only limited, effect both on pupils' learning in those subjects and on their ICT skills. The school is fortunate in having members of staff with high levels of

technical expertise who are prepared to give additional personal time to keep resources operating smoothly. However, the use of valuable professional time to maintain ICT systems is inefficient and the school needs to consider the appointment of an ICT technician. There is little documentation to support ICT within the school and a clear written policy and detailed development plan are urgently needed.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

145. All pupils study French in Years 7 to 9. In Key Stage 4, most pupils continue to study French either to GCSE or on an entry level certificate course. In Year 10, about 30 study Spanish as an alternative to French and a few are disappplied from modern foreign languages to follow a pilot citizenship course. GCSE courses in Punjabi and in Chinese are taken by a significant number of pupils outside normal lessons.
146. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in French are slightly below the national average, with fewer pupils reaching or exceeding the expected levels defined by the National Curriculum. Standards of work seen in the school reflected the results of recent formal assessments by teachers of work at the end of Key Stage 3. This represents, though, a satisfactory achievement by the youngsters when related to their achievement when they started the course three years earlier.
147. Pupils' listening skills in French develop particularly well: they understand classroom language used by their teacher and they can deal appropriately with native speaker voices on tape in a range of common situations and contexts. In speaking, pupils manage reasonably well in simple, structured exchanges, and they know a range of basic patterns. In many cases accents are quite good, but many lack the confidence and mastery to be able to extend their utterance beyond the well rehearsed. More able pupils grasp basic grammar, increasing in complexity and demand as time goes on. However, many average and lower attaining pupils struggle to comprehend and retain some of the complexities and show confusion at times. Reading comprehension is satisfactory, but the range of texts used is generally fairly narrow. Some pupils are beginning to extend this skill through occasional independent reading. This should be encouraged further. Written work is satisfactory, but often limited in scope. Pupils take good care with their presentation, but the opportunities are not frequent enough, particularly through Years 8 and 9, to write extended pieces which are relatively open-ended and personalised. On balance, average and lower attaining pupils progress well, but some more able pupils are not always stretched as far as they could be.
148. When pupils reach the age of 16, the standards attained are also below the national average. A much smaller proportion than average are entered for a full GCSE examination in a modern foreign language: less than 25% compared to nearly 80% across the country as a whole. The number of pupils gaining an A* to C grade is thus well below the national average, being approximately 5% in 1999 and 10% in 2000, whereas the national figure is around 40%. The trend in GCSE attainment continues to be upwards. For example, the average points score for pupils taking French GCSE has risen by half a grade over the last couple of years. These comparisons though, mask some very creditable achievement. Within the context of the school where results generally are below national averages, those pupils who elect to take a full French course do better than the national average in relation to

their other GCSEs. Additionally a good half of pupils take an entry-level Certificate of Achievement in French or Spanish at the end of Key Stage 4, and achievement here is very creditable. Fifty-five pupils entered for this accreditation in 2000 and all of them passed. Overall, this reflects good progress for the majority of pupils through Key Stage 4.

149. During Years 10 and 11, the knowledge and skills established in Key Stage 3 are built on. The standard of work seen during the inspection generally reflected recent external examination results. At least sound and often very good progress is made, with the range and demand of the work extended in line with the requirements of GCSE or the Certificate scheme. However, most pupils continue to lack real confidence in speaking. They perform well at closely structured and well supported tasks, but are still not so good at taking the initiative to use French spontaneously and imaginatively. Pupils who are relatively higher attaining extend their grasp of grammar and, in their written work, produce some reasonable pieces which have a range of structure, tenses and vocabulary.
150. In both key stages, lower attainers and those on the register of special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. Gifted and talented pupils have sufficient opportunity at Key Stage 4 to achieve well although no specifically different provision is made for them.
151. Teaching overall is strong and effective. It is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Teachers know their subject very well and know how to teach it effectively. Their planning is very good. They are clear about what is intended, having both short and long term objectives which are explicit and understood by pupils. Teachers are thorough and painstaking in their preparation of lessons. Expectations are good in Key Stage 3. There is a good match between the work set, the needs of the subject and the majority of pupils. However, in large and mixed ability classes the work does not always fully stretch the most able in all aspects. Expectations are very good in Key Stage 4. Clear, realistic and challenging targets are set for pupils. The methods used are effective in both key stages: the range is suitable, the variety appropriate and attention is given to the range of skills. The management of pupils is very good. Teachers are extremely skilled and effective in using a balance of praise, encouragement and reprimand as appropriate. They create an atmosphere of support and encouragement, ensuring all take part and make progress. Teachers provide a strong structure and clear purpose to lessons but this can sometimes limit the amount of time given to pupils for extended speaking and independent work. This is less of an issue in Key Stage 4, where different methods are used, and pupils are expected to be more in charge of their own progress. On-going assessment is very good. Teachers constantly monitor pupils' progress and understanding in lessons and feedback appropriately. Teachers promote good work habits. The homework policy is effective and put into practice consistently well. Teachers' use of the target language is a strong and challenging feature in almost all classes, and good use is made of overhead projectors and other visual materials to support learning and understanding.
152. Learners in both key stages, and across the range of abilities, exhibit positive attitudes to the subject. Relationships are good, and there are gains for pupils in French classes in terms of their self-esteem. In many classes they are very attentive and willingly tackle the tasks set for them. They are frequently ready to work with

others and to help out their peers with things not understood. They recognise that their teachers work hard to try to plan and organise lessons and homeworks which are interesting, relevant and purposeful and that their own efforts and progress will be acknowledged and supported.

153. The subject is extremely well led. This has a positive impact on standards. Management of the subject is efficient and effective, setting high standards and high expectations. The subject has clear direction with documented policies and schemes of work giving a good framework for all teachers to help in their lesson planning. The specialist teaching team is coherent, shares values, and keeps up to date with subject pedagogical developments.
154. Recent moves on two fronts are important strengths:
- i. mutual classroom observations as part of a process for identifying, sharing and developing good practice, which provides a strong platform for further self-review as a means to sustaining improvement, and
 - ii. conscious and explicit development planning, setting priorities and targets for the subject's future. The department is in a good state to introduce effective performance management procedures.
155. A relative weakness has been a couple of years of relatively little development partly caused by the additional demands placed upon language teachers by their responsibilities elsewhere in the school. Although early into the new school year, it is clear from this inspection that things are now successfully moving forward again.
156. Accommodation for French is barely satisfactory; space is too cramped for large groups, which limits opportunities to use the full range of appropriate teaching methods and activities including, for example, drama, role-play, or survey work. The state of decoration of the three specialist rooms is uninspiring, despite some use of display, posters, help-sheets and pupils' work. The adjacent corridor is shabby and there is no dedicated subject working area for staff.
157. The match of good, qualified staff to the subject's curriculum need is a strong feature, and the impact of this on pupils' progress, learning and attitudes is complemented by the employment half time of a foreign language assistant. Resources for learning are now adequate in range, variety and amount. The library now has a reasonable stock of appropriate independent reading materials for French. The use of ICT to support study remains unsatisfactory.
158. Since the previous inspection, a number of improvements have been made: for example, standards of attainment are still moving upwards; the teaching quality is even more clearly a strength; assessment practice is good; there has been some clear development in monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness by the department itself; and development planning is now an established and purposeful feature of work in the subject. Overall the evidence from the current inspection is of satisfactory improvement, and gives every indication that improvement and the raising of standards can be sustained.

159. To support the continued improvement, the subject department is right to give attention to these issues:
- i. further updating of schemes of work to match new national level descriptions and programmes of study;
 - ii. further raising of the status of intensive speaking skill development within contact time, and of a grammar focus in Key Stage 3;
 - iii. better links with post-16, and encouragement of modern foreign languages study beyond 16;
 - iv. the continuing move to have a bigger proportion of 16 year olds accredited by points-bearing awards;
 - v. improvement to rooms and the working environment for modern foreign languages;
 - vi. more use of ICT to support modern foreign languages learning.

MUSIC

160. During the previous year the school had no full-time music specialist despite attempts by governors and senior managers to recruit one. As a result, lessons were taught by a succession of temporary teachers. This contributed to a decline in standards and pupils are therefore making less progress than reported during the last inspection. All written work dates from the beginning of the term of the inspection and there is no record of pupils' achievements in recent terms in composing or performing in the form of recordings on tape or musical scores or teachers' assessments. A new, recently-qualified teacher took up responsibility for music at the beginning of September 2000, two weeks before the inspection. This teacher has already begun the development of more detailed schemes of work which indicate clear progression within all aspects of the music curriculum. This will provide a basis for teaching related more fully to prior attainment and be the basis for improved standards.
161. The musical attainment of pupils when they enter the school is limited and below nationally expected levels for the majority. Standards in music for pupils at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are much lower than national expectations. At Key Stage 4 pupils are working at a standard usually associated with upper Key Stage 2. For example, they create simple compositions based on repeating patterns within specific modes. Pupils who entered for GCSE music examinations in 1999 generally achieved well in comparison to their other subjects. A smaller number of pupils were entered for GCSE music in 2000 and the results were lower than in the previous year.
162. Learning is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 where pupils are making steady progress from a low base-line of knowledge and skills. In Key Stage 4, music is an option currently taken only by a small number of pupils. Here the motivation of the pupils is higher and the quality of learning is good. Where the pace of the lessons is good then learning is satisfactory, but at times the pupils' response to the subject determines that the pace is slow and then learning is unsatisfactory. Examples of very good work were seen where the whole class response was good and pupils responded positively to the challenge set.

163. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 3 with some good teaching and some examples of unsatisfactory teaching observed. The pace of the teaching is sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour from pupils. Examples of unsatisfactory behaviour were observed which prevented pupils from focusing fully on their work and as a result learning was unsatisfactory. There is clear evidence that pupil management is improving and disruption lessening as the teacher gets to know the classes better. At Key Stage 4 teaching is satisfactory and occasionally very good. In many lessons pupils benefit from the subject specialist knowledge of the teacher who encourages them to build on their previous learning to make progress. Support for individuals is satisfactory, enabling them to learn and make progress although the teacher's expectations are frequently too low. Pupils' use of appropriate music language is encouraged but further development of classroom discussion is needed to enhance opportunities for pupils to share their own criticism and analysis of music. In the most successful lessons pupils share their successes with each other and use appropriate musical vocabulary to comment on the work of their peers. Individual lesson plans sometimes fail to provide a variety of tasks to support and challenge pupils of all levels of ability.
164. The generally unsatisfactory music accommodation is a limiting factor on the range of teaching and learning activities that can be planned. The smaller teaching spaces are uninviting, some are unheated and some show evidence of vandalism and disrespect for furniture and equipment. The lack of sound insulation in this poorly maintained building creates difficulties for group performance and composition. There are no opportunities for instrumental tuition in school this year. This will eventually limit the possibility of future GCSE pupils achieving the highest grades. The range of departmental resources is limited although some new classroom instruments have been purchased this term. Music tapes or CDs, textbooks, classroom performance scores, teachers' resource books, ICT and appropriate software and songbooks all need investment. Fully functioning computers suitable for music education are not available in the music area and so the statutory requirements of the music orders of the National Curriculum are not being met. Extra-curricular activities in music were launched at the beginning of the term of the inspection and are currently limited to two choirs. Boys are under-represented in these.
165. The new teacher in charge has already had an impact on the subject. He is working with admirable confidence in the classroom and is beginning to address a very grave situation with the preparation of schemes of work, the introduction of assessment procedures and the development of a bank of teaching ideas. All the available evidence suggests that this has potential to be a rapidly improving curriculum area. There is understanding of what needs to be done to provide musical opportunities for all pupils and a determination within the school to make it happen. The teacher in charge has a clear insight into the acute need for prioritising those developments that will have the most telling effect on pupils' progress and attainment.
166. Peer support is provided to the new teacher in charge of music by an experienced head of another department. This is in addition to appropriate induction training and mentoring given to all newly-qualified teachers. However, none of this provides subject specific guidance. The school intends that the well-established links between subject departments within the local Catholic secondary school

partnership will offer further support of this kind. Whilst this programme of support is appropriate, it should be extended to include opportunities to share good practice with successful music teachers in a variety of other schools.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

167. Overall standards of attainment in physical education in both key stages for boys and girls are at least in line with expectations. Pupils compete successfully in inter-school activities at district and city level with some achieving significant individual success. The wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities provided by specialist and non-specialist staff extends opportunities and raises pupils' attainment.
168. Standards of attainment are above those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils demonstrate high levels of skill and understanding when playing team games although performance standards in gymnastics are lower. GCSE results in physical education have improved significantly. In 1999, 41 pupils entered for GCSE physical education. Almost 50% of them achieved grades A* to C. This is significantly above the national average for the subject. All pupils gained at least a G grade. In the 2000 examinations the department achieved its best ever results with 80% of pupils achieving A* to C grades and 100% again achieving A* to G grades. The results of boys and girls are similar. Within lessons in all years, pupils demonstrate sound knowledge, understanding and skills in badminton, basketball, gymnastics, judo, netball, table tennis, soccer and swimming.
169. Pupils are competent learners and make good progress overall and across most areas of the physical education curriculum. They demonstrate that they are able to build on their previous work by consolidating and extending their learning. For example, Year 8 girls umpired a netball game and boys in Year 10 showed a range of skills and tactics in a competitive but conditioned game of soccer where good control and passing was essential. In Year 11, GCSE groups analyse the influence of different body types in sport, and in another module based on factors affecting performance, discuss the impact of drugs in the current context of the Sydney Olympics. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress in both key stages.
170. Teaching in the subject is good. Teaching was at least good in all lessons seen, and some of it was excellent. Lesson planning and organisation are detailed, providing structure and progression in learning for all pupils. Many elements contribute to pupils being able to understand and develop their work. These include effective class management, the use of shared learning objectives, clear explanations and demonstrations, together with well-planned opportunities for observation, analysis and discussion by pupils.
171. Pupils respond well to this purposeful and supportive approach. They are very well dressed, positive about lessons, pay attention and work with energy and enthusiasm. Consequently relationships and behaviour are very good. This contributes to pupils' good progress within the subject and to their social and personal development.

172. The department is very effectively led and managed. Assessment, recording and reporting arrangements successfully provide accurate information to pupils about their performances. This, together with regular self-evaluation and target setting, helps secure high standards of work. Relationships within the department are excellent. The experienced and knowledgeable staff make a very good team. They support each other well, work hard and contribute significantly to the ethos, work and life of the school.
173. The department has responded positively to the last inspection report. It is clear that in gymnastics and in other aspects of the subjects pupils are now actively involved in planning and evaluating their work. However, little progress has been made in improving the schools' accommodation, facilities and resources for physical education. These remain inadequate and continue to deteriorate. Hard play surfaces are now poorly marked and in places hazardous. No improvements have been made to changing rooms and showers are still in a poor state of repair. There is nowhere to use the expensive weight training equipment which the school owns.
174. The school is aware of these inadequacies. As part of a long term solution to the accommodation constraints, the governors and headteacher have been negotiating with the diocese, the city council and other agencies to secure more space either on adjacent land or on an alternative site. Progress has been slow and at the time of the inspection the outcomes remain uncertain. A further review of physical educational needs is urgently required and priorities established within a focused action plan. In the short term considerations should include essential repairs and replacement of equipment and facilities, extending the range of equipment which could be used on site, extending the limited range of sports books in the library, identifying a specialist classroom for physical education, and maximising effective use of off-site facilities.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

175. Business studies is taught as an optional GCSE subject to two sets in each of Years 10 and 11. In recent years results have risen. By 1999 GCSE results were high, with 59% of pupils gaining an A* to C grade compared to 51% nationally. Pupils generally did well in business studies when compared to their performance in other GCSE examinations. In 2000 that figure unexpectedly dropped to 34%, the reasons for which are currently being investigated by the school. Further work needs to be done to identify more precisely which pupils would benefit from being entered for the higher paper. Additional thought also needs to be given to ways of responding to the particular learning needs of pupils from different ethnic groups. Standards of attainment seen in Year 11 lessons during the inspection indicate that pupils are performing at levels comparable to the 1999 results. Coursework assignments have been thoughtfully and imaginatively completed, and some contain sophisticated financial analyses based on individual research. In many instances ICT has been used to gather, process and present information very effectively.
176. In lessons Year 11 pupils can identify break-even points for a product and can comment critically on the stages of a product life cycle for different types of products and can suggest when the optimum time to launch a new product should be. Year 10 pupils have received a lively introduction to the subject through a

simulated business exercise. Attainment levels in business studies are, as in the school as a whole, better for girls than boys. In general, pupils on the special educational needs register do not make the same progress as their peers.

177. Teaching is lively and well informed. Lessons are well planned and proceed at a stimulating pace. A range of learning strategies are used in order to provide variety and to keep pupils involved. There are good-humoured inter active class discussions led by the teacher which are illustrated with practical examples drawn from pupils' direct experience. Considerable emphasis is placed on establishing and applying key concepts which are systematically tested. Occasionally there is excessive teacher direction which limits opportunities for pupils to offer extended and reasoned oral answers or to draw from their prior learning. Pupils are made aware of what they need to do to reach different grade thresholds in each part of the course. They also know exactly how well they have done so far and what they should aim to do next. A recent review exercise conducted by the school rightly identified the assessment arrangements for business studies to be an example of good practice. The subject was not reported upon in the last inspection, but there is evidence of an upward trend in results and a greater use of new technology since 1996.