

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE**

Trent Vale, Stoke on Trent

LEA area: Stoke on Trent

Unique reference number: 131301

Headteacher: Mr J Stoer

Reporting inspector: Mrs Hilda Roxborough  
1931

Dates of inspection: 2 – 6 October 2000

Inspection number: 223992

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	London Road Trent Vale Stoke on Trent
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Martin Donnelly
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

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			The school's results and pupils' achievements?
			How well are pupils taught?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Mrs Valerie Bradley 9009	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr Henry White 2795	Team inspector		How well is the school led and managed?
			How good is the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mr David Bristow 1440	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Mrs Jane Lloyd-Davies 23436	Team inspector	English	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
Mrs Christine Thompson 14913	Team inspector	Science	
Mrs Carol Emery 3555	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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<b>Team members</b>		<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
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Mrs Shirley Hackett 12827	Team inspector	Information technology	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school situated in the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The school is much smaller than secondary schools nationally, having 604 pupils aged 11-18 years on roll with 89 pupils in the sixth form. The school draws its pupils from a very wide area.

The school was formerly a direct grant grammar school from 1944 to 1979. In 1980 it became an independent boys' school, in April 1997 it became grant maintained and is currently a local authority maintained, voluntary aided school. There are more boys than girls in all year groups except in the sixth form. The school is oversubscribed and there is an entrance examination in order to gain entry. Numbers on roll have risen steadily since 1996. The majority of pupils stay on into the school's sixth form from which the majority of students go on to higher education.

The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language is 4.1% (which is higher than the average for most schools) but none of the 25 pupils is at an early stage of learning English. There is one pupil (in the sixth form) with a statement of special educational need. There are 68 pupils on the school's special educational needs register of whom 30 are dyslexic with the remainder having moderate learning or behavioural difficulties.

Attainment on entry is well above the national average. Well over 90% of pupils enter the school having attained Level 4 or above in English, mathematics and science and over 40% have attained Level 5 in these subjects. Only a very few pupils enter the school with standards below the national average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. They achieve standards well above the national average by the ages of 14 and 16 and above the national average by the end of the sixth form. Pupils make good progress up to age 14, very good progress up to the age of 16, and sound progress in lessons in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Over half the teaching seen was good though there is also an unacceptable proportion of unsatisfactory teaching within mathematics, science and French. The school is well managed and the leadership by the headteacher is very good. Although the school has not had a previous Section 10 inspection, there is evidence that the school has made improvements in the past five years particularly in relation to management and standards achieved. In view of these factors the school's effectiveness is good. The school's expenditure per pupil is above the national average for former grant maintained schools. The school provides sound value for money although the sixth form provision is expensive and not currently cost effective.

### **What the school does well**

- The school has a shared commitment to raising standards and continuing improvement under the very strong leadership of the headteacher.
- Pupils attain high standards.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school, their behaviour and attendance are very good, and relationships are excellent.
- Teachers know individual pupils very well and are fully aware of their physical and emotional needs. They respond to pupils in a very positive and highly supportive way. The aims of the school are very highly reflected in its work.
- Parents are very satisfied with the work of the school and their support and involvement are very good.

### **What could be improved**

- The quality of teaching and learning within mathematics, science and French throughout the school should be improved.
- Assessment procedures are weak, particularly in assessing attainment against national standards in Years 7 to 9, marking and the monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress over time.
- The work set for more able pupils in many lessons is insufficiently challenging.
- The school does not monitor and evaluate its work systematically enough. This is hindering improvements in aspects of the curriculum and its delivery.
- Long-term strategic planning is not fully in place.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements in relation to pupils' entitlement to information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

This is the school's first Section 10 inspection. There is no previous inspection report and hence it is not possible to make comparative judgements about progress since the last inspection.



## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

By the ages of 14 and 16, the school achieves very high examination results which are in the highest 5% nationally. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national averages by ages 14 and 16. Within the school, the highest standards by the age of 14 are attained in English. Standards at A-level are above the national average. The school also compares very well at age 14 and 16 with similar schools, again being in the top 5%. When the school is compared to similar schools in the report, this refers to schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. Up to the age of 16 all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language and those pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, generally achieve well.

In the sixth form, in some subjects (mathematics, design and technology), students do not make as much progress as they could. Boys achieve better than girls in the sixth form reflecting their earlier higher attainment at GCSE.

Over time standards have improved throughout the school. Standards of work seen in lessons are high overall and reflect the high standards achieved by pupils in public examinations.

The targets set for GCSE for the year 2000 were challenging and the school exceeded these targets. The school has set appropriately challenging targets for the year 2001 and is making good progress towards achieving these.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very good, they are enthusiastic about school and show very good involvement and interest in all aspects of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils highly respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Personal development and relationships	The relationships which pupils have with each other and the staff are excellent. Their personal development is very good.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

Pupils' very positive attitudes, their behaviour, attendance and relationships are strengths of the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

*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. In 90% of lessons seen the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better. In 53% of lessons teaching was good, very good or excellent. In 19% it was very good or excellent. Teaching was less than satisfactory in 10% of lessons. The largest proportion of teaching which was less than satisfactory was found in the sixth form. In English all teaching seen was satisfactory or better and there was a very high proportion of good and very good teaching. All the English teaching in the sixth form was good or better. In one out of five mathematics lessons teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. In one out of four science lessons the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory. In modern foreign languages lessons seen, whilst there was a high proportion of good and very good teaching, there was also unsatisfactory teaching in one in seven lessons.

All teaching seen was satisfactory or better in Years 7 to 11 in English, art, design and technology, geography, information technology, music, Spanish and physical education. All teaching was satisfactory or better in the sixth form in English, art, business studies, biology, design and technology, history, information technology, music, Spanish and physical education. The higher proportions of good and very good teaching throughout the school were found in English, design and technology, history, Spanish and art.

The skills of literacy are taught well across all subjects. Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily in a narrow range of subjects. Overall the school satisfactorily meets the needs of most pupils,

including those for whom English is an additional language and those who are on the school's register of special educational needs. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. On occasions, the work set for the more able pupils is insufficiently challenging and this limited the progress they made in the lessons seen. Marking is frequently a weakness in the work of many departments.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Breadth, balance and relevance across the curriculum are satisfactory. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils do not receive their statutory entitlement to information technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory provision is made for pupils on the school's register of special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Although the school has a higher proportion than the national average of pupils for whom English is an additional language, there are no pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Provision is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Taken overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good personal support and guidance for its pupils and overall satisfactory care for them.

The school works very well in partnership with its parents. The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is not currently satisfactory. Whilst the school monitors the pupils' academic progress, it does not currently relate these to national standards before pupils reach the end of Year 9. The break between lessons 3 and 4 is hindering progress in practical subjects.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior managers provide very good leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school. Management by heads of departments and heads of year is overall satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors satisfactorily fulfil their responsibilities and play a key role in shaping the direction of the school. Governors do not ensure that all pupils study information technology in Years 10 and 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has made a good start to the analysis and evaluation of its performance in relation to standards. Self-evaluation is at the early stages of implementation and is not systematic enough.
The strategic use of resources	The use of resources is satisfactory.

Overall there are satisfactory levels of accommodation and learning resources. The match of staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. In some subjects, such as physical education, poor accommodation is adversely affecting learning. The school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating its work are currently at an early stage of development and are not having sufficient impact on improving teaching and learning. The principles of best value are well applied by the governors and senior management team.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The good relationships in the school, the keen interest taken in the pupils by staff and the individual support they provide.</li> <li>• The good attitudes, values, attendance and behaviour which the school promotes.</li> <li>• The good range of homework which the pupils receive and the good standards which they achieve.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school, particularly the sports, music and drama.</li> <li>• The role model provided by the headteacher for everyone in the school and the way in which staff are always available for consultation with parents</li> <li>• The two-way communication which parents have with teachers through the pupils' journals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant concerns were raised by the majority of parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' very positive views of the school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and achievements

1. **Standards of attainment of pupils on entry are well above the national average for 11 years olds. Pupils undertake an entrance examination in order to gain admission to the school. The majority of pupils have achieved the national standard of Level 4 and nearly half of the pupils have attained a Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. No pupils on entry have attained a Level 6 as would be expected in a traditional grammar school. There are very few pupils who have only achieved a Level 3 on entry to the school. There are no pupils who have achieved lower than a Level 3 in any core subject.**
2. Standards by age 14 in English, mathematics and science are well above national averages and well above the average for similar schools. When the school is compared to similar schools in the report, this refers to schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. The school overall achieves very high standards which are in the highest 5% nationally and in the highest 5% of similar schools. Throughout Years 7 to 9 pupils are achieving well in lessons and making good progress to reach these standards.
3. There has been a steady improvement in standards by age 14 years in all core subjects with increases in the numbers gaining Level 6 and above over the past three years. Within the school the highest standards are attained in English. Girls are performing better than boys in English but this is not significantly different to the national picture. There is no difference in performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. Teacher assessments of pupils' standards by age 14 years are lower than the test results for English and science.
4. By age 16, the school overall achieves very high standards which are well above the national averages and which are in the highest 5% nationally. Standards are well above the national average for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades and five or more A\*-G grades at GCSE. The average total points score for the year 2000 at 58.7 is also well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. The school achieves in line with the top 5% of similar schools.
5. GCSE results improved significantly from 1998 when 71% of pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades to 2000 when 86% of pupils achieved this standard. The average total point score also rose over a similar period from 48.7 to 58.27. This improvement is greater than that shown nationally.
6. Up to 1999 the difference between boys' and girls' performance by age 16 has been in line with the difference found nationally. In 2000, however, girls significantly out-performed boys. This relative underachievement by boys has been identified by the school and is being addressed. Value added analysis based upon attainment of pupils by age 14 years in 1997 and 1998 and their attainment in GCSE in 1999 and 2000 respectively, shows that pupils' progress is very good and well above that found nationally. In lessons throughout Years 10 and 11 pupils achieve well.

7. The targets set for GCSE for the year 2000 were challenging and the school exceeded these targets. The school has set appropriately challenging targets for the year 2001 and is making good progress towards achieving these.
8. Entry to the sixth form is selective and is based upon students gaining at least two B grades and four C grades in GCSE. Nearly all students take four A-levels including general studies. Numbers in the sixth form are small and so comparisons with national data have limited validity. Standards, however, by the end of the sixth form are above the national average but do vary from year to year. The average point score in 1999 for pupils entered for two or more A-levels at 19.3 was lower than the previous year of 24.2. In 2000 the average point score was 19.48 for two or more A-levels. Boys are achieving a much higher average points score at 22.75 than girls at 12.0 for two or more subjects reflecting their earlier higher attainment at GCSE.
9. In some subjects in the sixth form particularly in mathematics, and design technology students do not make as much progress as they should.
10. Standards of work seen in lessons throughout the school are high and reflect the standards achieved by pupils in public examinations. In over half of lessons seen standards are above national averages. There were very few (3%) lessons in which standards were below national averages and these were found in Years 7 to 11. Standards seen in sixth form lessons were always at or above national averages.
11. In all subjects except physical education, all 14 year old pupils achieve standards which are above or well above national expectations. In physical education they are in line with national expectations. In all subjects standards at GCSE are above or well above the national averages.
12. Overall standards by age 14 years in English, mathematics and science have improved over time, whilst high standards in these subjects have been maintained for 16 year olds. Pupils attain lower standards in mathematics than they do in their other subjects. Throughout the school standards have improved over time.
13. In lessons most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress over time. There is no significant difference in achievement in lessons between boys and girls, pupils for whom English is an additional language or for the pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. The work planned for the more able pupils to undertake in lessons does not always build sufficiently upon their previous learning. This, on occasions, limits the progress they make.
14. Throughout the school, literacy skills are good. In speaking and listening most 14 year olds talk confidently in a range of situations and listen carefully taking account of the views of others. By the time they take GCSE, the majority of pupils communicate clearly, structure their talk appropriately and show that they have listened perceptively. In reading, the majority of 14 year olds read fluently and with high levels of understanding. At age 16, the most successful readers recognise authors' intentions in a range of texts and are active readers. Only a very small number of weak readers do not make critical responses to their reading. The majority of 14 year old pupils write in a range of forms for different purposes

and the highest attaining pupils of 16 years of age are able to use a range of literary devices and produce writing that is varied and interesting. In the sixth form, students make increasing use of literary theory and recognise the need for detailed textual analysis. The majority of students produce detailed analyses and offer reasoned arguments.

15. Throughout the school standards of numeracy are satisfactory. In those subjects where numeracy skills are used, pupils show competence and confidence in applying relevant knowledge and understanding to the context of the work. Pupils are generally able to apply mathematical techniques when they arise in science and geography and elsewhere.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

16. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. The vast majority of pupils like coming to school, show interest in their work and persevere with the tasks set. The very good attitudes to learning are a reflection of the excellent relationships within lessons and throughout the school. In English, pupils convey enthusiasm for the subject, are attentive at all times and ask questions where appropriate to further their learning. In history, pupils collaborate well and sustain very good levels of concentration as exemplified in a Year 7 lesson on the Romans. In mathematics pupils show respect for the efforts and ideas of others.
17. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. A positive characteristic of the school is the courtesy shown to visitors by pupils. At break times and lunchtimes the school is a very orderly community. There is no vandalism or graffiti. Prefects and sixth form students conscientiously exercise their responsibilities and act as diligent mentors to pupils in Year 7. During the last twelve months there has been only one permanent exclusion and the number of fixed term exclusions is below average for schools of this size.
18. There is a strong tradition in the school whereby pupils support a range of local and national charities such as Amnesty International and CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development). In lessons pupils show willingness to discuss personal values and attitudes to issues of concern. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson pupils discussed the rights and responsibilities of teenagers. Throughout the discussion they listened with respect to the views of others.
19. There is no racial tension evident at all in the school and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix harmoniously and through their own choice. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are fully integrated within the school. There is no overt bullying and pupils and parents report that it is not an issue in the school. Pupils frequently work together in mixed gender groupings.
20. Attendance is well above the national norm and the incidence of unauthorised absence is very low. Punctuality to school is very good and has improved during the last twelve months. Punctuality for lessons is satisfactory although adversely affected by the lack of time in which to move between lessons.
21. Pupils respond enthusiastically to opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities particularly games and sports. A large number of pupils are involved in sport, musical

activities and drama whilst others have joined curriculum related classes such as art, information technology and science.

22. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate attitudes and behaviour which suggests that they think about their actions and the impact these have on others. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school and this is recognised by parents.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

23. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. In 90% of lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better. In 34% of lessons teaching was good and in 19%, teaching was very good or better. These good and better lessons promote good learning and progress. In one in ten lessons seen teaching was less than satisfactory and did not promote satisfactory learning and progress.
24. All teaching seen was satisfactory or better throughout Years 7 to 11 in English, art, design and technology, geography, information technology, music, Spanish and physical education. All teaching seen was satisfactory or better in the sixth form in English, Spanish, art, biology, business studies, design and technology, history, information technology, music and physical education. Teaching is most effective throughout the school in art, English, design and technology, Spanish and history.
25. The good practice seen in lessons in the teaching of art, English, history, Spanish and science is not shared on a regular and systematic basis with all staff both within and across departments to inform and promote the quality of teaching.
26. Less than satisfactory teaching was mainly found in science, mathematics, and French. This unsatisfactory teaching is found throughout the school. The largest proportion of teaching which was less than satisfactory was found in the sixth form.
27. Teachers are well qualified, well deployed and totally committed to raising standards and continuing improvement. They have a secure and accurate knowledge of the subjects they teach. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally good and their management and discipline of pupils is mostly good. Teachers' relationships with pupils are excellent. Parents particularly appreciate the help and support which pupils receive both in and out of lessons. The excellent relationships make a very positive contribution to learning. Pupils feel able to ask for help or clarification. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson, a pupil felt confident enough to ask 'Women didn't have the vote so how could they affect politicians?' knowing that the question would be respected by others and seriously answered by the teacher.
28. Good teaching is characterised by some excellent use of open questioning to probe pupils' understanding and application of previously learnt skills. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson on prohibition the teacher asked pupils 'Why were women against drinking alcohol?' and continued to prompt them saying 'yes anything else?' to further develop their answer. When this occurs, other pupils listen attentively and this has a positive effect upon both their understanding of the subject and the development of their literacy skills.



29. Effective teaching resulting in good learning is characterised by pupils showing a keen interest in their work and sustaining their concentration. Pupils respond well when there is a variety of stimulating activities within a lesson such as drama, role play, use of video clips, games, puzzles, and short brisk warm up activities reinforcing previous learning. Good practice is also seen when teachers encourage pupils to discuss topics as a whole class or in small groups. For example, in a Year 13 general studies lesson each group of students was given a different thought provoking statement about space travel to discuss, and then synthesise and present an argument as a group to the rest of the class. This provided them with the opportunity to share and clarify their ideas and hence make good progress in their understanding. The best lessons also move at a brisk pace, with strict time targets given to pupils to complete tasks. These strategies always result in effective, appropriate, continuous learning throughout the lesson.
30. Homework, which is usually set regularly, is a strength of the teaching at the school. Pupils enjoy their homework and carry it out thoroughly and conscientiously. A wide range of activities are given, including research from books and the internet, preparing presentations, as well as writing poetry and practising new mathematics work. Homework extends and develops the learning which has taken place in lessons. The headteacher personally monitors the setting of homework and this raises the importance of homework and its role in learning throughout the school. The effort which pupils make with their homework plays a major role in the progress they make in their learning in all subjects.
31. In some weak teaching, teachers have low expectations of pupils. This is seen in pupils' books where work is incomplete and not followed up by teachers. Pupils are not set targets for subsequent work when a piece of work is clearly unsatisfactory or showing repetition of errors. There is no insistence on corrections being carried out even when these are indicated. Work is not dated, it is not clear whether the work is homework or class work and some books have several pages used by pupils inappropriately.
32. In some weak teaching the pace of lessons is slow. This was seen in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, where the pupils sat for 20 minutes listening to an explanation of their homework which most of the pupils had completed correctly. This time was not well used to support their learning. Also where the teacher talks for long periods of time pupils lose concentration, become bored and learning is unsatisfactory. For example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson the teacher talked for most of the lesson giving an explanation of sine, cosine and tangent. Pupils did not have chance to consolidate, check or extend their understanding and so learning was unsatisfactory.
33. Teaching in business studies in the sixth form is good. The teacher has good knowledge and understanding of the subject and a sound grasp of economic realities. Appropriate learning strategies are used, including brainstorming, good use of open questions and a good balance between practical and discussion activities. The teacher ensures that individual strengths contribute to the overall good learning.
34. Good opportunities for developing literary skills are provided in a number of lessons across the curriculum. In speaking and listening pupils are required to take part in structured discussions, for example, in a general studies lesson sixth form students were asked to argue a case when considering the importance of art. Pupils are required to make oral

presentations, as did a Year 13 student in a sixth form assembly. Other subjects contribute to pupils' writing by providing opportunities to write in a range of genres. For example, in history pupils write extended pieces in the form of newspaper articles and narratives. In science, Year 8 pupils were asked to write imaginatively to explain that the Earth is round to the pupils of the fourteenth century. In religious education pupils created their own version of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In science, pupils are encouraged to use the appropriate technical terminology in their talk and in their writing and in geography Year 9 pupils are introduced to and use the sophisticated vocabulary of plate tectonics. Although in many lessons reading is restricted to worksheets and course books, for homework and independent study, pupils are required to undertake a range of extended reading and research tasks. The skills of literacy are generally taught well across all subjects.

35. Little explicit attention is paid to the teaching of numeracy beyond what is implicit in the mathematics National Curriculum. In subjects such as science, mathematics, information technology and geography, numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily. For example, in physics in Year 10 pupils were able to substitute values into algebraic formulae and rearrange formulae such as Ohm's law  $V=IR$ .
36. Overall teaching meets the needs of most pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language and for those who are on the school's register of special educational needs. Most pupils make satisfactory or better learning gains in lessons. On some occasions, however, pupils on the schools' special educational needs register are over reliant on teacher support. In some of the lessons seen, the most able pupils were making insufficient progress as the work set did not always challenge them appropriately. In the majority of lessons pupils are in mixed ability groups and in most lessons all pupils are given the same work to undertake in the same amount of time.
37. Most pupils' work is marked regularly. There is clear evidence, however, that marking practices vary across the school. Comments on work are, in the main, the teacher's corrections or comments relating to effort and presentation. There are fewer examples of teachers' subject specific written comments, which explain to pupils what they need to do to improve their next piece of work. The school's marking policy does not provide sufficient practical guidance to help teachers to improve their marking skills.
38. Too often teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment information to plan work so that it systematically builds upon pupils' previous learning. Currently teachers do not assess pupils' attainment against national curriculum levels in Years 7 and 8.

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

39. Overall the range and quality of the curriculum are satisfactory. The school ensures that there are equal opportunities for all pupils and that they all have access to all aspects of the curriculum.
40. All of the National Curriculum subjects and religious studies are offered in Years 7 to 9. In Years 8 and 9 pupils study two foreign languages. This is a sound basis in ensuring that all pupils can study two foreign languages for GCSE and at A-level. The time allocated,

however, is insufficient for each language to be studied in sufficient depth. In design and technology there is insufficient time for the requirements of the programme of study to be covered adequately.

41. In Years 10 and 11, the national requirement to offer English, mathematics, science, a modern language, religious studies and games is fully met. The curriculum is traditional and offers the opportunity for pupils to specialise. All pupils in Year 11 follow a course in design and technology, but in Year 10 the school has formally disapplied this requirement. This is intended to enable pupils to develop their interests and aptitudes by specialising in separate sciences, two modern foreign languages, the creative arts or the humanities. This use of disapplication is effective in meeting pupils' needs. In Years 10 and 11 an information and communication technology programme of study is not taught to all pupils and the school is failing to fulfil a National Curriculum requirement.
42. The school makes considerable efforts to make computers accessible to pupils whenever possible. There is an open door policy which allows pupils in Years 10 to 13 to access information technology facilities in the information technology rooms when other lessons are taking place. There is good access to information technology facilities at lunchtimes and after school as well as to the information technology facilities in the library.
43. In the sixth form, the range of A-levels satisfactorily meets the aptitudes and needs of students and builds progressively on the courses offered at GCSE. When necessary, the school arranges for students to study other courses such as psychology, at a local college. In the present Year 12, sixteen A/S levels, including business studies, are offered and the majority of students fulfil the national expectations by following four A/S courses in a broad range of subjects. All pupils follow the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies in Year 12. In Year 13 the religious education provision is fulfilled through A-level general studies. A good induction course is provided for students entering the sixth form. This involves outside speakers and team-building activities at school which are then developed at an outdoor centre. Students' social, moral and cultural development continues mainly through games and community service although opportunities are also provided for music and drama, Young Enterprise and work shadowing.
44. A conscious decision has been made not to assess key skills in the sixth form during the current year to allow all subjects to focus their work on eliminating underachievement in the sixth form. An improved method of monitoring each sixth form student's progress has been introduced recently to combat underachievement. Early indications are that parents are pleased with the improved system and pupils are more focused on their work. The governors are aware that the current sixth form provision is not cost effective and steps are being taken to overcome this. Governors have long term plans to extend the range of courses offered to include vocational courses and to increase student numbers in the sixth form.
45. Some schemes of work are not yet fully effective in supporting teaching and learning. However, the school has identified this issue and is currently reviewing its curriculum documentation. Many departments do not provide opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology skills in a variety of contexts within their subject. The use of information technology in subjects is limited.

46. The structure of the timetable means that for some lessons there is a break between lessons 3 and 4 of a double lesson. This disrupts the flow of the lesson and is having a detrimental effect on the continuity of learning and on pupils' attitudes, particularly in the practical subjects of art, design and technology, music, physical education and science.
47. Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified on the school's register of special educational needs. Teachers know these pupils well and plan their work accordingly. Pupils are adequately helped by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support teacher. Withdrawal from lessons for some pupils also provides appropriate support. Dyslexic pupils make good use of information technology: it helps them to achieve success which motivates them to stay on task longer. Provision for pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is satisfactory.
48. The wide range of extra-curricular activities offered at the school is very good. In addition to a wide variety of sporting and musical activities, opportunities are offered for art, chess, computer programmers, information technology, mathematics, prayer, speech and drama and science. Good homework facilities are also provided after school. Pupils and their parents appreciate the time given by teachers in providing these facilities which support learning and the development of social skills.
49. The provision for personal, social and health education is currently unsatisfactory. This has been recognised in the school development plan and a co-ordinator has been appointed to develop this work. There is currently no documentation to show how the recommended themes of developing confidence and responsibility, a healthy, safer lifestyle and good relationships and respecting the differences between people will be taught systematically and progressively from Year 7 to Year 13. There is no indication of how the school will monitor this provision or how pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding will be further developed in subject lessons and the other opportunities provided at the school.
50. Provision of careers education is satisfactory and has taken place predominantly through careers evenings, meetings with careers advisers, talks, work experience in Year 10, work shadowing in Year 12, visits to university departments and through the use of the careers library where books and software are readily accessible. A good quality logbook to support their work experience placement is used well by pupils. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education in terms of knowing what levels of attainment are needed if they are to be able to pursue particular career routes. A Partnership Agreement for the delivery of careers guidance has now been signed with Staffordshire careers and appropriate activities are outlined for all years from 7 to 13. Careers guidance is satisfactory. Work related learning is limited to careers education, work experience and work with local companies.
51. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. Plans are well in hand to ensure that all Year 10 pupils have a one-week work experience placement. There is good local support for the annual Challenge of Industry day for Year 9 pupils, for the Young Enterprise projects and for supporting design and technology coursework in Years 10 and 11. The army provides very good problem-solving activity days for sixth form pupils, and A-level chemistry pupils benefit from visits to the local university to learn about modern

analytical techniques. Local companies give excellent support to the school by providing over 60 different information technology coursework projects for GCSE and A-level. A local company with French based headquarters has arranged to fund a French assistante for the languages department. All of these initiatives motivate the pupils and have a positive impact on extending pupils' learning.

52. Relationships with other institutions are satisfactory. The school does not have the benefit of designated feeder primary schools but it works hard at liaising with such schools as have been attended by Year 7 pupils. Students are able to study A-level psychology at a local college of Further Education. Discussions are taking place with this college regarding the joint provision of post 16 vocational education.
53. Taken overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is mainly because the school's aims are strongly reflected in all of its work. The teaching of English makes a major contribution in this aspect of the school's provision but there are also contributions from art, geography, history, and science. Although assemblies and form registrations provide opportunities for spiritual development, they have more impact on other aspects of pupil's personal development. However, there is little systematic planning or co-ordination to guide the delivery of a programme of spiritual, moral and social development. The lack of a definite personal, social and health education programme also adversely impacts on this provision.
54. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. For example, in English, Year 13 pupils studying *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy consider the role that fate plays in the novel and its effect on the central characters, and allusion is also made to Hardy's relationship with God. Year 13 students studying *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams consider human relationships and frailties. When the final scene is acted out by the students, the effect is emotionally and spiritually powerful as the students themselves recognise the tragedy of Blanche and the richness and depth of the play.
55. Moral education is good. Pupils know right from wrong, they respect others and know, understand and uphold the school's rules and values. There are many occasions when moral issues are addressed both in lessons and in assemblies. For example, in an assembly for Year 7 to 9 pupils, a short video was shown *Christmas Child*. The strong moral component of this had great impact on pupils. Another assembly for Year 12 and 13 students explored the effect of third world debt on education and health provision in the countries concerned, and contrasts it with the wealth and opportunity in the developed world. In science, there are moral debates on cloning and the environment. In geography, a Year 12 lesson on the population policy in China explored the issues of human rights, justice and ethics that are involved. The moral and spiritual dilemma is taken forward carefully and sensitively with insights shared by students and mediated by the teacher. The lesson contains clear reference to Catholic ethos and principles.
56. The provision for pupils' social development is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in trips and visits including retreats, competitive games against other schools, and also in lessons such as English, general studies, science and design and technology. Sixth form students take responsibility as prefects, carry out community service, and act as reading mentors to help younger pupils. In an English lesson Year 9

pupils working in groups present their responses to the question "Our society acknowledges that thirteen year old children have rights. Do they have responsibilities? If so, what are they?" Pupils develop and refine their ideas regarding different aspects of responsibility in the family, to community, school, friends and so on, and a lively debate ensues in which the pupils are helped to define their views.

57. Pupils' cultural education is good. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to take part in school plays, the school magazine, and to see a visiting writer. There is a school orchestra and a choir, and in one assembly for Year 10 and 11 pupils, an ensemble of Year 10 pupils gave an excellent performance of a piece of music written by a pupil. In a whole school assembly, a visiting speaker from CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) gave a good perspective on the recipients of aid in Africa as real people with dignity, who thank donors for their generosity. In English, pupils experience a wide range of literature, including classics and more contemporary works.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

58. Teachers know individual pupils very well, and are fully aware of their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. They respond to them in a positive and very supportive way. The excellent relationships encourage a very positive atmosphere within the school, which provides a very good learning environment. There are very good relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form. The code of conduct clearly states the behaviour expected of pupils, and pupils fully understand the systems of rewards and sanctions. Pupils value the merit system, and appreciate the certificates awarded.
59. Pupils' personal and social development is informally monitored by heads of year, in conjunction with deputy headteacher, through good personal knowledge of pupils, and regular monitoring of pupils' journals. For pupils throughout the school who are identified as lacking motivation and needing additional support, there is good systematic monitoring of their personal and academic progress. Last year the school introduced a system of identifying pupils approaching GCSE examinations who were not performing as well as they were able. Mentors for these pupils very successfully supported them to raise their standards. Other pupils, however, particularly those who are more able, do not receive any individual additional support. All pupils are encouraged to set themselves short term targets but these are not sufficiently specific to support the raising of standards and are not checked by staff to see if they are appropriate or if they have been achieved.
60. There is no consistent system of assessing pupils' work against national standards in all departments particularly in Years 7 to 9. The on-going monitoring of pupils' long term academic progress over the whole curriculum is hampered by this lack of accurate assessment data. For older pupils, there are records of expected grades in examinations, and progress reports each term give indications of how pupils are progressing towards these projected grades. Generally, the lack of accurate and systematic assessment data precludes the effective monitoring of and support for pupils' academic progress. The school's development plan identifies the need for such a system and for the generation of accurate and appropriate assessment data.
61. The school is developing strategies to ensure that the loosely-structured programme of personal, social and health education contains all the necessary elements required, including sex education, drugs education and citizenship. Some aspects are currently being well taught in religious education, physical education and science lessons but there is no monitoring system in place to ensure that all pupils receive their National Curriculum entitlement.
62. There are satisfactory child protection procedures in place, which meet statutory requirements. The deputy headteacher is the person designated as having responsibility for child protection. Liaison with appropriate services, especially with the education welfare officer, is good.
63. There are sound policies and broadly satisfactory practice on health and safety. The safety equipment is checked periodically and the procedures for recording and reporting accidents are effectively implemented. There is medically qualified support available to pupils if needed. However, during the inspection several health and safety issues were

identified and notified to the school. The condition of the gym is a cause for concern, as are the uncovered radiators there, and chairs remain stacked in the hall while it is used for physical education. The drains in one of the science laboratories frequently become blocked. Concerns raised by a very few parents regarding the safety of pupils while returning to the school from games activities have been addressed by an increase in the supervision by members of staff.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

64. The school very successfully encourages a good working partnership with parents. Parents are very supportive of the school, and appreciate the care and support given to their children. Parents commend and very effectively support work that pupils do at home, and provide a wide range of facilities and resources including computers. The support from parents for homework has a very positive impact on the pupils' learning.
65. Parents are required to sign pupils' journals weekly. These journals provide a very good means of communication between home and school that is extensively and very effectively used. Well presented and informative newsletters have recently been introduced and these too are appreciated by parents. Music and drama productions are very well supported and enjoyed by parents. Many parents provide a high level of support to the school through the Parents and Friends Association (PFA). Through a variety of successful fundraising and social events, the association provides substantial funds to provide resources for the school.
66. Attendance at parents' consultation evenings is very high. The school is very approachable. Tutors, heads of year, teachers and senior staff are readily available for consultation by parents. There is frequent personal and telephone contact between school and home, and parents are involved at an appropriately early stage if problems occur.
67. The quality and range of information available to parents through pupils' annual reports regarding the areas of work studied are satisfactory, but annual reports do not give sufficient information about pupils' attainment against national standards. Not all reports indicate the progress made by pupils during the year, and few give indications as to how the pupil can improve. Reports at the end of the autumn and spring terms give parents information comparing the pupil's achievement against others in the class but not against national standards. These reports give pupils an opportunity to contribute, and some set targets for improvement, but these targets are not sufficiently precise or measurable to support the raising of standards.
68. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not fully conform to statutory requirements. The prospectus does not give the names of the headteacher and the chair of governors. Information regarding the school's admission policy and the policy for pupils with special educational needs are not included in the prospectus. The governors' annual report to parents effectively informs parents about the school's progress and achievements during the year, but does not contain details of the arrangements for pupils with disabilities nor of the school's facilities to assist access to the school by pupils with disabilities.



## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The very good leadership of the headteacher has ensured that there is a whole-school shared commitment to raising standards and continuing improvement. The headteacher inspires and motivates staff and pupils and takes responsibility for all aspects of the school in a calm manner. He provides a clear and exemplary role model to the school. This is greatly valued by the parents. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior teacher in continuing to focus on further improvements. This very good leadership was evident throughout the inspection process.
70. Management of the school overall is generally good. The school development plan identifies and clearly addresses issues central to the raising of standards, particularly the need to ensure that the work in lessons meets the needs of all pupils in the class, and that their learning is not over-dependent on the work of teachers. To this end, the need for improvements in the evaluation of lessons by middle managers has been recognised and a comprehensive training programme put in place.
71. The current school development plan, however, has not been costed precisely, it does not coincide with financial years and the success criteria are not measurable. The evaluation of the previous year's plan is weak because of the lack of appropriate success criteria and hence lacks judgements about the effect of the plan on raising standards. The school does not have a plan for the next three or five years. The governing body and the headteacher have clear views about future developments in terms of accommodation and staffing needs; how these will need to develop when post 16 provision caters for a wider ability range of students and the management structures which will be needed to bring these improvements to fruition. This long term plan, however, has not been documented and shared fully with staff.
72. The school's aims and values expressed in its mission statement are reflected very well in the work of the school. This is a strength of the school. Staff are committed to the welfare of their pupils; they have high expectations of behaviour and academic success. In their commitment to develop the whole person, teachers provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities, together with community service opportunities for students in the sixth form. Parents value the excellent relationships which exist throughout the school and commend the staff for the amount of time they are prepared to devote to their children. For their part pupils set themselves high standards of attendance, behaviour and commitment to hard work. Pupils and staff take a pride in their school; the environment is well cared for and free of graffiti and litter.
73. Throughout the school there is a very good commitment to improve. The appointments of the deputy headteacher and senior teacher were strategically made by the governing body in order to address the needs of the school. Both have made a positive impact in helping the staff recognise that improvements are needed in the pastoral organisation of the school, the provision for pupils' personal, social, health and careers education and the need for heads of department to develop their leadership and management role.
74. Delegation to middle managers is satisfactory. Job descriptions are clear and the senior management team has ensured that all middle managers are aware of their need to be

accountable for their work. Heads of department know the strengths and weaknesses of their departments following reviews by outside consultants. Most have used these findings to inform their departmental development plans. Management is good in art, design and technology, English, history and information technology. Although the head of French and head of Spanish work well together and collaboration and consistency have increased recently, there is no overall leadership of modern foreign languages issues within the school. This is weakening the impact of the subject and the focus on improving standards. The two heads of departments are also aware of the major weaknesses within the two departments. In other subjects management by heads of departments is overall satisfactory but the effectiveness of middle managers is currently restricted by their limited ability to monitor and evaluate the impact of their work on standards across the school.

75. Heads of year show good leadership in their work, particularly their commitment to improve the school's procedures for monitoring the academic performance, the personal development and attendance of pupils in their year groups.
76. The governing body is effective in shaping the educational direction of the school. Governors are committed to the ongoing improvement in the school and have an effective committee structure to support their work. The minutes of the governing body reflect their concern to be well informed about current educational issues such as sixth form curriculum development, the new arrangements and structures relating to teachers' pay, and working time directives. The school is effectively held accountable for its examination performance, budgets are monitored monthly and reports by local consultants on the quality of education at the school are considered at length. Several heads of department have made presentations to the governing body. Considerable purposeful debate has been devoted to the major issues relating to the future development of the school such as the need for a sports hall, a sixth form centre, sixth form curriculum developments, and long term staffing plans.
77. The governing body has a sound awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and this is reflected and appropriately prioritised in the current school development plan. Appropriate performance targets have been set for the headteacher.
78. The arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are currently inadequate. Members of the senior management team have observed all teachers on two occasions during the last year and detailed feedback was given. This monitoring focused on the quality of the communication of the lesson's learning outcomes to pupils. It did not identify general weaknesses in teaching and so that these could be addressed. There was no evaluation of the inter-relationship of learning and teaching. The school development plan indicates that this is to be addressed in the current term.
79. Satisfactory arrangements have been made for the introduction of performance management. Senior staff have attended training, governor training is in hand, and the model performance management policy is currently being introduced. The headteacher is well supported by the governing body when issues of poor management or weak teaching need to be addressed. The headteacher has a proven record over recent years in identifying and facing up to such weaknesses and eliminating them.

80. The school is making satisfactory progress both in attaining the targets it has set itself regarding maintaining the number of pupils gaining five GCSE grades at A\*-C and combating the under-performance at A-level.
81. The school makes good arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and all who are new to the school. A comprehensive, development system is in place for all new teachers to the school, including understanding the distinctive nature of a church school. There is a good match between the training provided to teachers and the developmental needs of the school. A range of development strategies is used including internal mentoring, visiting other schools, or attending courses.
82. The governing body and the headteacher ensure that educational priorities are supported through good financial planning. Both the chair of the governors' finance committee and the headteacher are clear about the cost of the various developments at the school. They understand the implications of staff salary and responsibility allowance costs in an expanding school. They are aware of the costs involved in developing the new sixth form centre and the ongoing desire to have a sports centre. Strategic management of major spending is good. The school documentation shows that the current sixth form provision is expensive and not cost effective. The school is addressing this issue through the projected expansion of the sixth form and the introduction of new vocational courses. Day to day financial controls have met with the approval of the most recent external audit: no recommendations were needed.
83. The school makes good use of the principles of best value. There is good analysis of examination data and financial data and comparison with other schools. Low staffing costs are readily explained in terms of the staffing structure in which all members of the senior management team have a considerable teaching role. The high cost of support staff is explained in terms of the additional demand when a school provides its own catering arrangements. The school effectively and regularly reviews its spending on the costs of extra-curricular activities. For example, the high costs associated with extra-curricular sport reflect the level of pupils' involvement and the commitment of staff to provide the wide range of activities on offer. Consultation with the Parents and Friends Association took place before their donation of £8000 was spent on replacing the lighting system for dramatic productions. The finance officer is charged with obtaining competitive quotes for supplies. The governing body is currently challenging an overcharge associated with a major building development. The school has not yet developed any systems to evaluate the value for money on major spends, such as the recent purchase of lap top computers.
84. The school is making satisfactory use of new technology. A range of information technology equipment is used effectively in information technology lessons. The ratio of pupils per computer is 5:1 – this is better than the national figure of 8:1 although the school is striving to improve its provision further to 4:1. These computers are located mostly in computer rooms which are used for 85% of the week. This is limiting the use of computers throughout all subjects, although some departments such as science are making good use of the 20 lap top computers which are available. The school makes good use of its computers for extra-curricular activities. The current school development plan identifies the need for a whole-school computerised management system; the school is well placed to implement this.

85. The match between the numbers of teaching and support staff, their qualifications and experience, and the demands of the curriculum are good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and the requirements of the GCSE and A-level syllabuses. The technicians provide good support to teachers and pupils. They make a positive contribution to the quality of learning in their subject areas. The pupils on the school register of special educational needs are well supported by the learning support assistant. The cleanliness of the school reflects the high standards set by the site manager and his team. This makes a significant contribution to the good ethos of the school. The efficient work of the secretarial and finance staff contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school.
86. There are significant shortcomings in accommodation. The isolation of the mathematics room and the lack of departmental resource base are militating against the teamwork needed to improve performance. In the old physics laboratory, where services are around the edge of the room, teachers are unable to see all of the pupils to assess their practical skills or monitor safe working. One of the art rooms is very cramped, there is no sixth form studio space and there is a lack of storage space for large scale and three-dimensional work. There is insufficient space for administrative work or information technology development in art. The gymnasium is old and the on-site field soon becomes water logged. The music rooms are spread about the school. One is too small for large groups and a practice facility is not readily available for group work. The current sixth form study room is not conducive to private study.
87. Overall the quality and range of learning resources is satisfactory. Resources are inadequate in geography. Shortages of equipment result in groups in science which are too large to participate fully in practical work. Music lacks quality acoustics instruments and instruments from other cultures. The books used in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 do not show mathematics in an interesting context. These shortages have an adverse effect upon the quality of learning.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

88. In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should seek to:
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning within mathematics, science and French so that all lessons are satisfactory or better in these subjects. (*see paragraphs 104-10, 117-124, 197*)
  - Improve:
    - i. the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment against national standards in Years 7 to 9 and make better use of the assessment data gained about individual pupils to inform and improve lesson and curriculum planning;
    - ii. the consistency of marking practices throughout all subjects so that pupils know what they have achieved and how they can improve their standards of attainment and

- iii. the monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress over time so that staff have a more detailed knowledge of pupils' areas of weakness and address these with appropriate strategies. (*see paragraphs 60,37, 38*)
- Ensure that the work set for the more able pupils in lessons is always sufficiently challenging. (*see paragraph 36*)
- Fully implement the monitoring and evaluation policy at all levels of management to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and use the outcomes to eliminate the weaknesses and further raise the quality of teaching. (*see paragraphs 73, 78*)
- Prepare and implement a long-term strategic plan for all aspects of the school's development. The planning should focus on improving teaching and learning and raising standards. It should indicate resources, contain success criteria against which to measure progress made in relation to the improvement of standards and quality of teaching, and indicate the strategies which will be used to evaluate the outcomes. (*see paragraphs 70, 73, 78*)
- Meet statutory requirements in relation to the delivery of information and communication technology for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. (*see paragraph 181*)

In addition to the key issues above the following less important weaknesses, many of which have been identified in the school's current development plan, should be considered in the action plan.

- Ensure that all pupils are receiving their entitlement in relation to personal, social and health education through a coherent, progressive strategy and programme of learning throughout Years 7 to 13. (*see paragraphs 49*)
- Improve the progress which pupils make in the sixth form in certain subjects so that the negative value added post 16 is eliminated. (*see paragraphs 8, 9*)
- Ensure that timetable allows all lessons to be continuous so that pupils can obtain the maximum learning from the time in the lesson without having to stop and start over a break period. (*see paragraph 46*)

## **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed

145

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

47

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	18	34	35	9	1	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	604	89
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	8	0

#### **Special educational needs**

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	63	5

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8
National comparative data	7.9

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	1.1

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	51	39	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	50	49
	Girls	39	39	39
	Total	90	89	88
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 [94]	99 [89]	98 [90]
	National	63 [64]	65 [62]	59 [55]
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	93 [71]	86 [68]	76 [57]
	National	28 [28]	42 [38]	30 [23]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	47	51	49
	Girls	39	39	39
	Total	86	90	88
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	96 [94]	100 [84]	98 [90]
	National	64 [64]	66 [64]	62 [60]
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	59 [46]	80 [61]	68 [58]
	National	31 [31]	39 [37]	29 [28]

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

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4***

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	33	23	56

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	27	33	33
	Girls	21	23	23
	Total	48	56	56
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	85.7 [85.4]	100 [100]	100 [100]
	National	46.5 [45.3]	89.0 [88.6]	94.5 [94.1]

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	58.3 [ 54.4 ]
	National	37.7 [40.1]

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/A



***Attainment at the end of the sixth form***

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	10	33

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	22.75	12.0	19.48[19.3]	2.7	6.0	3.5 [1.0]
National	16.9	17.7	N/A [18.2]	2.6	2.8	2.7 [3.0]

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		N/A

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	6
Pakistani	10
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	3
White	576
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	38.65
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	169

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74%
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 2	N/A
Key Stage 3	25.7
Key Stage 4	19.7

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1489818
Total expenditure	1484680
Expenditure per pupil	2797
Balance brought forward from previous year	22815
Balance carried forward to next year	27953

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	518
Number of questionnaires returned	352

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	37	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	40	4	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	43	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	48	7	1	2
The teaching is good.	45	48	2	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	40	5	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	22	3	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	20	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	41	7	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	67	27	3	2	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	32	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	41	11	6	5

### **Other issues raised by parents**

There were no other issues raised by parents

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

### **ENGLISH**

89. Overall, standards of attainment in English are very high and have been consistently over the last three years. In 1999 test results for 14 year old pupils gaining Level 5 and above were well above the national average and very high in comparison with similar schools. GCSE English results for 1999 were well above the national average with 98% of pupils attaining A\*-C grades. Although boys perform less well than girls at 14 and 16, the difference in attainment is not significant when compared with the national pattern. A-level results for the small number of students who took the examination in 1999 were above national averages for overall pass rate and achievement of the higher grades. These high standards have been consistently achieved during the last three years. The high standards in examinations and tests are reflected in the high standards seen in lessons.
90. In speaking and listening by age 14 most pupils talk confidently in a range of contexts and listen attentively, taking account of the views of others. For example, groups of Year 9 pupils effectively debated their views on the rights and responsibilities of teenagers in society. By age 16, the majority of pupils communicate clearly, structure their talk appropriately and show that they have listened perceptively. A small minority of pupils throughout Years 7 to 11 are less confident and do not make sustained contributions to discussions. In reading the majority of 14 year olds read fluently and with high levels of understanding. By age 16 the most successful readers recognise authors' intentions in a range of texts and are active readers. For example, Year 10 pupils studying Carol Ann Duffy's poetry demonstrated close reading skills in order to discover for themselves the main themes and language features. Only a very small number of weaker readers do not make critical responses to their reading. Sixth form students make increasing use of literary theory and recognise the need for detailed textual analysis. In writing the majority of pupils by age 14 write in a range of forms for different purposes. By age 16 the highest attaining pupils are able to use a range of literary devices and produce writing that is varied and interesting. A small minority of lower attaining pupils experience difficulty with the organisation of their writing. In the sixth form the majority of students produce detailed analyses and offer reasoned arguments as demonstrated in their work on U. A. Fanthorpe in which they explore the mythology and religious ideology in her poetry.
91. Overall, progress in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form is good. There is little discernible difference in the progress of different groups of pupils. Progress is most marked in reading. Pupils are given appropriately challenging tasks on demanding texts. For example, Year 9 pupils successfully identified the context, setting and relationships between central characters when working in groups on the opening scene of *Twelfth Night* requiring little intervention from the teacher. Year 10 pupils studied the techniques associated with propaganda and applied these to their reading of *Animal Farm* and to famous speeches from the past. Pupils carried out detailed analysis at word and sentence level. In Year 12 students studying Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* were asked to compare the representations of love which they had found in poetry with McEwan's treatment of the theme of love. As a result students were able to make perceptive comments and to demonstrate increasing understanding of McEwan's characters and their motives.

92. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen and in half of the lessons the quality of teaching was very good. Teaching was slightly better in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form than it was in Years 7 to 11. A distinguishing feature of the best teaching is a high expectation of pupils that is reflected in the high degree of challenge present in the work. Where this occurs there is a clearly positive impact on the quality of learning. In a Year 10 lesson on Robert Browning's *Porphyria's Lover* the pupils were required to go beyond their initial understanding of the event described to discuss the specifics of word choices and the way in which they reflect mood and style. The class successfully teased out the contrasts in the poem and were able to justify their comments with textual references.
93. A strength of the teaching is the opportunities given for pupils to work collaboratively and to learn independently. For example, a Year 7 class worked in pairs to construct a poem from the words of Tennyson's *The Eagle*. As a result pupils were led to both a clearer understanding of what constitutes poetry and to exercise their knowledge of grammar and syntax.
94. Many lessons are characterised by good use of questioning and pupils being prompted to refine and expand their answers. Well structured speaking and listening activities in which pupils take responsibility result in very good gains in understanding. An example of this occurred in a Year 13 lesson on *A Streetcar Named Desire* when the students were required to enact, unrehearsed, the final scene. As a result, the students were able to demonstrate for themselves the tragedy of Blanche and the darkness of William's message in the play. A good feature of many lessons is the way in which teachers establish new skills and knowledge in the context of prior learning as exemplified when parallels were drawn between the characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and characters in *Othello* from students' earlier reading. Teachers establish positive working atmospheres in their classrooms. Good planning including a range of activities in the three language modes results in effective pace and a sense of purpose.
95. Where teaching is less effective the lessons are dominated by teachers' talk and there are fewer opportunities for pupils to participate actively. The department makes good provision for the consideration of spiritual, social, moral and cultural issues so that, for example, when students read *Tess of the D'urbervilles* they also considered the role of fate in our lives, Thomas Hardy's relationship with religion, class and the historical context.
96. The English curriculum and the way it is taught ensures that all pupils are able to learn during lessons. Although the department has not formalised its strategy for meeting the needs of the most able pupils the curriculum offered is effectively challenging to ensure that they work at the appropriate level. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well supported.
97. Pupils' attitudes to learning in English are very good and their behaviour is excellent. The very positive and supportive learning ethos in all lessons is a major strength of the department. Pupils are usually enthusiastic about the subject and are keen to participate, answer questions and present their work. They work very well collaboratively in groups and in pairs and sustain concentration.

98. The English department is efficiently and effectively led by the head of English whose own teaching exemplifies the aims of the department. There is good morale in the department and a shared commitment to development. The department has identified appropriate priorities for the future. Whilst target setting has begun for some pupils, it is not yet fully in place for all pupils. Monitoring of pupils' achievement and the mentoring of pupils identified as underachieving is effectively focused on those pupils working at the GCSE C/D grade borderline but does not have a similar impact for other pupils. Marking and day to day assessment procedures are helpful and supportive. However, success criteria for individual pieces of work are not always shared with pupils nor are they always sufficiently explicit to ensure that the marking is fully understood by pupils. This does not support pupils in achieving what is required or in improving their work. Monitoring of the curriculum and its delivery is not sufficiently systematic.
99. Standards of literacy in other areas of the curriculum are high. Good opportunities for developing literary skills are provided in a number of lessons across the curriculum. In speaking and listening pupils are required to take part in structured discussions, for example, in a general studies lesson sixth form students were asked to argue a case when considering the importance of art. Pupils are required to make oral presentations, as did a Year 13 student in a sixth form assembly. Other subjects contribute to pupils' writing by provided opportunities to write in a range of genres. For example, in history pupils write extended pieces in the form of newspaper articles and narratives. In science, Year 8 pupils were asked to write imaginatively to explain that the earth is round to the pupils of the fourteenth century. In religious education pupils created their own version of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In science, pupils are encouraged to use the appropriate technical terminology in their talk and in their writing. In geography Year 9 pupils are introduced to the sophisticated vocabulary of plate tectonics. Although in many lessons reading is restricted to worksheets and course books for homework and independent study pupils are required to undertake a range of extended reading and research tasks.

## **MATHEMATICS**

100. Standards by age 14 in mathematics are well above the national average for all schools, and also well above the average for similar schools. These results have improved considerably since 1997, at a rather faster rate than nationally. Standards at GCSE are also well above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. These results have broadly been maintained in the same period. On the whole, standards of work in classes in the school at present bear out this picture of high attainment and pupils are on course to attain similar standards by ages 14 and 16. Pupils enter the school with high attainment, and their progress through the school is at least satisfactory. Standards are broadly similar in all areas of mathematics, though there is a tendency for pupils to achieve higher standards in number and algebra, and lower standards in using and applying mathematics.
101. Most pupils achieve in line with their ability. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' achievements or pupils for whom English is an additional language.

102. Standards at A-level, by contrast, are low. In recent years, relatively few students have entered for A-level mathematics, and while a few students have attained high grades, most have achieved grades below C. Standards in the present Year 13 are commensurate with this level of performance, and several students from this group dropped out of the course at the end of Year 12. Year 12 teaching groups therefore include a number of Year 13 students who are repeating the Year 12 course in order to retake AS examinations only. Entry requirements for sixth form courses are higher than average and there is noticeable underachievement measured in terms of progress from these high GCSE grades at 16 years to the end of the sixth form.
103. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to mathematics are universally good at times very good. All come to lessons expecting to work hard. Their behaviour is also very good. For example, nearly all pupils expect to complete mathematics homework twice a week, and they co-operate fully with their teachers, sustaining their attention and concentration to an exemplary standard no matter what they are required to do.
104. Mathematics teaching, on the other hand, does not fully capitalise on these advantages. There is much sound teaching and some that is good, but in 20% of lessons seen teaching and learning were less than satisfactory. Teaching and learning overall, therefore, are unsatisfactory. This situation is similar throughout the school. Where teaching is good, its strengths include a number of traditional virtues. The intended learning is identified specifically and in detail, explanations of mathematical concepts and skills are carefully focused, clear and well paced, and make use of carefully organised demonstrations on the white-board. This ensures that pupils have good opportunities to grasp the subject matter. The teacher sets appropriate exercises, keeps pupils on task and working hard, and ensures pupils know whether their work is right or wrong. This enables pupils to make good progress in consolidating their understanding and practising their skills. Diligent marking ensures pupils present their work well, both in class and for homework, and enables the teacher to find out how far the pupils have understood the content of lessons. The planning for subsequent lessons is based on this information.
105. Nearly all teaching is based on good subject knowledge, and pupils' progress is helped over the longer term by assiduous attention to setting and marking of homework. Even in lessons where teaching is only sound overall, there are often good features. Examples include the use of questions that require pupils to give explanations or justify their ideas instead of just answering with a single word or short phrase. Other lessons start with puzzles, games or quick-fire mental and oral warm-up questions to reinforce basic numeracy skills and the content of previous lessons.
106. However, in some lessons, explanations confuse pupils because they are not well planned and not focused on sufficiently clear objectives for the learning that is intended. In others, explanations that are quite clear are unnecessarily extended and repeated thereby wasting time and limiting learning. Progress in A-level classes is also restricted unnecessarily when students are required to copy copious notes. This does not give them the opportunity to check their knowledge and understanding and develop their skills.
107. Work in lessons is not always adequately matched to the abilities of all pupils in the group, particularly the more able. It is also noticeable in Years 7 to 9, that there are missed

opportunities for teaching and learning to build more quickly on knowledge, skills and understanding gained by pupils before they entered the school. Overall all pupils from Year 7 to 11 make satisfactory progress over the longer term.

108. Scientific calculators are used effectively, and the department is developing its use of graphic calculators. However, its use of other information technology is unsatisfactory.
109. The quality and use of assessment vary. There are satisfactory procedures for assessing progress over the long term, and much attention is paid to assessing and marking homework. On occasions, teachers evaluate the match of work set to pupils' needs by techniques such as questioning the class, by informally checking pupils' work as they walk round, by reading answers so that pupils can mark their own work, and by responding to pupils' body language. However, in many lessons teaching pays insufficient attention to finding out whether pupils and students understand concepts and make progress in gaining knowledge and skills. This means that pupils' misconceptions and mistakes are not discovered and rectified as quickly as they could be. Opportunities are missed to go over work with small groups rather than whole classes or individuals and pupils are sometimes required to spend too much lesson time revising work they have learned previously. Marking of pupils' books includes few comments. Pupils are often informed how to improve through symbols that show where errors have been made, and through verbal comments at the beginning of the next lesson. However, there is little written by teachers in pupils' books to help them to improve their learning.
110. The current head of mathematics has been in post for one month at the time of the inspection. He has undertaken much analysis and planning and has improved the leadership and management of the department which are currently satisfactory. The department now analyses examination results, but does not yet have systems for monitoring teaching and learning directly by classroom observation or by looking at pupils' work. All mathematics staff share a commitment to raising standards, but the isolation of one classroom from the others and the lack of an effective departmental resource base is hindering the development of teamwork necessary to achieve improvement. Resources are sufficient in quantity, but in Years 7 to 11 particularly, the textbook materials, which form the basis for the schemes of work, show mathematics as a series of dry skills and techniques, not as an interesting, lively subject with relevance for the pupils.
111. Little explicit attention is paid to the teaching of numeracy beyond that which is implicit in the mathematics National Curriculum, but standards are nevertheless at least satisfactory. Pupils are generally able to perform appropriate calculations without a calculator and apply mathematical techniques where they arise in science and geography and elsewhere.



## SCIENCE

112. Pupils' performance in science by age 14 in 1999 was well above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Boys and girls achieve equally well. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades in the national tests is well above the national average. In 1998 and 1999 fewer pupils in the school gained the highest levels in science than in English and mathematics; this difference is reduced in the test results for 2000. The percentages of pupils attaining national expectations and those attaining the higher grades have risen over the past few years. Standards in 2000 are well above the national average.
113. Standards are very high at GCSE. More able pupils usually take the three separate sciences biology, chemistry and physics. The percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades is above the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the highest grades, A\* and A, is above the national average in biology, physics and chemistry. For those pupils who take the double award science GCSE examination; the percentage achieving A\*-C grades is well above the national average. All pupils gain an A\*-G pass grade in the GCSE science examinations. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Value added analyses show that pupils make very good progress from age 14 to 16.
114. In lessons from Years 7 to 11 standards seen in science were good. Pupils gain good knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the subject. They write well and usually answer questions with confidence and fluency. There are some excellent written reports of scientific enquiry and overall the standard is high. The standards of literacy and oracy in lessons are good.
115. Taking the 1999 results in A-level examinations for biology, chemistry and physics together the percentage of pass grades obtained is in line with the national average. The percentage obtaining the highest grades is below the national average. Value added analysis of A-level science results show that in 1999 pupils achieved lower grades in biology, chemistry and physics than pupils in other schools. In 2000 more pupils attained the highest grades. The value added analysis for 2000 shows that these students made better progress in physics and biology than previous groups. In chemistry, however, the progress made is still lower than expected nationally.
116. In the sixth form standards seen in lessons were overall satisfactory but varied. Students' performance was very good in biology lessons and varied from satisfactory to good in chemistry and physics. There were some excellent written reports of traditional physics investigations.
117. Overall the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning in science vary from very good to poor. In about three-quarters of the lessons seen it was satisfactory or better with one in four being very good. In about a quarter of lessons teaching and learning were unsatisfactory.. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was found in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. In Years 10 and 11 nine out of ten lessons seen were satisfactory or better.

118. Teaching overall has many strengths. Throughout the department teachers' knowledge of their subject is always at least satisfactory. Nearly all lessons have a clear structure where the purpose of the lesson is shared with the class, there are activities designed to achieve the learning objectives and the lesson finishes with a plenary where the learning that has taken place is identified and consolidated. All teachers emphasis scientific vocabulary and use praise to identify what pupils have done well and questions to involve them in a lesson. Mathematical skills of data handling and graphing are frequently used in practical activities; in physics pupils use mathematics extensively when applying physics equations. Often pupils are issued with a summary of the learning objectives for a topic to use to check their own progress; they have the grade criteria for coursework so that they can see what they need to do to achieve a higher grade. These strategies have a positive effect upon learning.
119. Where teaching is good, as in about a quarter of lessons seen, teachers plan a variety of activities to maintain pupils' interest during the lesson. For example, in the first lesson on acids with a Year 7 class, pupils worked in pairs to produce a list of words they associated with the word acid; all of these were negative such as burning and poisonous. As a whole class they agreed that they would not eat or drink acids and were astonished when the teacher read the names of acids on the contents list of two big bottles of lemonade. A well-directed practical activity followed in which they learned to use the chemicals provided safely and carefully.
120. Another feature of good teaching is the support and encouragement of independent learning. In a Year 13 biology lesson students were asked to write a report on the formation of new species. By answering questions students identified the areas of knowledge which should be included, a worksheet gave them an outline structure and a progress checker so that they could monitor their own progress. They had a good range of resources including information technology to use for their research.
121. Where teaching is good the teacher encourages pupils to use technical vocabulary, praises its use and then repeats answers for the class modelling how to use scientific words precisely. Teachers also use open questions to help pupils to extend and clarify their thinking.
122. Where teaching is good science is related to everyday life as in the lesson on acids mentioned above; another example was a homework on how pupils used physics in their summer holidays. Homework is an integral part of the planning and frequently consolidates and extends what pupils have learned in class.
123. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, as in a quarter of the lessons seen, it is always because insufficient appropriate learning has taken place in the lesson. There are a number of reasons for this. Low expectations of what pupils could achieve results in slow pace of learning and lack of challenge to pupils. Sometimes, the scheme of work is not used carefully enough so that the activities did not achieve the learning objectives of the lesson. On other occasions the learning objectives are too vague and the lesson lacks direction; this was reflected in pupils' books that had headings such as 'What we did today'.
124. Teaching is unsatisfactory when the teacher spends too long talking to the class or when the lesson is over-directed and those who work quickly sit and chat until the rest of the class

finish. Sometimes lessons are unsatisfactory because the teacher gives long time-wasting activities such as drawing complicated diagrams without a follow up activity to test or develop pupils' understanding of what they have drawn. A lesson which had the potential to be good was unsatisfactory because of the lack of preparation of the laptop computers. Some did not have enough battery life and others did not have the required Excel spreadsheet programme. The teacher had not checked these before the lesson and insufficient learning took place in the time available.

125. Some pupils' written work reveals unsatisfactory features of teaching. On occasions, pupils' written conclusions based on practical work are insufficiently evaluative. For example, an able Year 9 pupil writes: "I think this experiment went quite smoothly and I learnt a lot of things I didn't know before." The response from the teacher '10/10 Well done' was inappropriate on this occasion.
126. Another unsatisfactory aspect of teaching seen in pupils' written work is the lack of illustrative or investigative practical work in some topics. For example, cells were studied at the start of term by classes in Years 7, 9 and 10; none of the books gave any evidence that pupils had looked at cells under a microscope.
127. Teachers regularly mark pupils' written work. However, the quality is variable. Some mark carefully and give advice to help pupils to improve the quality of their work. However, others do not always provide this level of support and guidance. The marking of GCSE coursework is very good with the quality of annotation praised by the external moderators.
128. A satisfactory start has been made in monitoring pupils' progress by recording on a spreadsheet all marks from tests, coursework and end-of-year examinations. Currently this is only used to monitor progress of low achievers and is inadequate in supporting the progress of all pupils.
129. Pupils' attitudes to work are very good and their behaviour is excellent. They respond enthusiastically to challenge and, where teaching allows, work at a good pace in lessons. Across the years and different areas of science, pupils are acquiring new knowledge and understanding and applying intellectual and creative effort in their work. They apply intellectual, physical and creative effort to their homework particularly when working on their individual research projects and writing up GCSE coursework. They respond eagerly to questions and ask questions which show that they are relating new knowledge to what they have learned earlier. In practical lessons they organise themselves efficiently, work sensibly and safely, and finally clear apparatus away with minimum fuss. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as a second language is comparable with that of others. Although there is some unsatisfactory teaching of science in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form, the good and very good teaching that pupils also experience, ensures that overall they make satisfactory progress. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is good.
130. The management of the department is sound with good features. Since the head of science was appointed three years ago he has successfully managed many changes to bring the department up-to-date with current statutory requirements. Schemes of work have been

written and these have recently been reviewed and changes made to bring them in line with Curriculum 2000. He has monitored the performance of the department by analysis of results in national science tests and examinations; these have been compared with national results. A satisfactory start has been made to monitoring and evaluating the work of the department.

131. Overall, this is an improving department. The department development plan reflects both whole-school priorities and the needs of the department. Progress has been reviewed annually against the plan. Success criteria are, however, insufficiently precise to enable monitoring and evaluation procedures to be carried out effectively.
132. In most lessons seen resources were satisfactory but there were four lessons in which pupils' learning was adversely affected by inadequacy of resources. Of the two laboratories in need of refurbishment, the old physics laboratory is unsuitable for modern science; services are around the side so the teacher cannot, without losing the overview of the whole class, watch pupils working to assess their practical skills or to ensure safe working.
133. Nearly all science lessons are of one hour which is suitable for practical work. In the morning the two lessons are separated by break-time; this can be detrimental to learning. It alters the balance of theory and practical with some practical activities being rushed in half an hour to avoid interruption. Sometimes when a practical activity takes longer than thirty minutes pupils and teacher miss their break.

## **ART**

134. By age 14 the majority of pupils do well in art when compared to others of the same age and ability. Most pupils reach expected levels, and many are working beyond expectations. Pupils exhibit proficiency in painting, drawing and working with mixed media. In ceramics and three-dimensional design, some construction skills are clumsy, but pupils are able to experiment with less familiar materials with assurance and flair. Drawing from observation is generally of a high standard. Students are very good at research and evaluation, and are able to talk about their work and the work of others with confidence.
135. Standards by age 16 are substantially higher than the national average for GCSE. All pupils have attained A\*-C grades for the past two years. Boys do less well in art than girls, but their relative achievements are higher than national differences in performance. Drawing skills are well developed, and research and design skills are good, but particularly strong in textiles, and mixed media. The use of workbooks for both critical studies and practical work is a strong feature of art department practice
136. Results at A-Level are good, with the majority of students gaining higher grades, although the small numbers entered make detailed analysis of results difficult. Increased group size in the present sixth form is helping to raise standards, as pupils are able to learn from one another in addition to their teacher. Standards are particularly high in painting and drawing and work in textiles and mixed media. Sketch and workbooks are exemplary and display sophisticated skills in critical studies, research and investigation. Increasing emphasis on the inclusion of three-dimensional coursework is helping to raise standards.

137. Aspects of art which are currently underdeveloped in practical work include printmaking (particularly in Years 7 to 9), photography and information technology.
138. The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons is good, frequently very good and never less than satisfactory. Two very well qualified and enthusiastic teachers cultivate a strong, co-operative atmosphere in lessons which has a positive impact on pupils' interest and motivation. The majority of lessons are well paced, showing good classroom management and efficient deployment of materials. Teaching is lively and energetic, and techniques are demonstrated with flair and expertise. Leadership is visionary, but there is a lack of monitoring of teaching and insufficient working together as a team.
139. Teaching and learning are less effective when the pace relaxes, and the rigour and sense of purpose of the lesson are not stressed. Lessons do not always strike the correct balance between reactive support for individual pupils and interaction with the whole class.
140. All pupils respect each others' ideas and work, and teachers sensitively deal with the complete ability range, creating a stimulating, supportive and caring learning environment. Display throughout the school and department is very good, both as a celebration of pupils' achievements and as an invaluable tool for learning. Shared discussion and practical activity are stressed in all art lessons, although there is very little evidence of large-scale group work.
141. Pupils enjoy art and their efforts are praised and valued by peers and staff. Homework is set frequently and seen as a relevant and natural development of work done in class. Attitudes and behaviour are outstanding, and the positive ethos is a strength of the department. Pupils are enthusiastic, compliant, and highly confident independent learners. Some learning and motivation are hampered when mid morning break interrupts a double lesson and practical activities are disrupted.
142. The department's schemes of work are appropriate and well constructed, although they do not take account of the new National Curriculum and are not linked with clear assessment objectives. Methods of assessment are generally effective, and the monitoring of pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is exemplary. Teachers make very effective use of pupils' record of achievement files - a system that is beginning to influence work done by pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Pupils' progress is effectively tracked throughout the school and examination pupils are given appropriate and challenging targets. The department lacks a set of standardised pupils' work, which could be used as benchmark to raise standards throughout the school.
143. The department's accommodation consists of two well-equipped purpose-built teaching areas. Both rooms are often cramped when accommodating classes of over 25 pupils, and there is insufficient studio space for A-level pupils. There is a lack of adequate storage space especially for large-scale and three-dimensional work and insufficient space for art administration and information and communication technology developments. The department has good resources in terms of stimulus material, books, consumable materials and equipment. The employment of a technician provides a valuable departmental resource which well supports the quality of teaching.

144. Opportunities to expose more pupils to the work of others through trips, artists' residencies and links with external agencies are lacking. Opportunities for cross-curricular partnerships, particularly in the expressive arts and with design and technology are insufficiently explored. The after school art club, however, is highly effective in helping to raise standards.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

145. Statutory assessment by teachers of 14 year olds' work indicates very high attainment. However, the interpretation by the department of the national level descriptions in 2000 was flawed and inaccurate. The recently appointed head of department is putting into place the appropriate assessment procedures to ensure accurate attainment levels for pupils in the future. In Years 7 and 8 most pupils are working above national standards with no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. However, standards in the current Year 9 do not reflect the same high level of attainment particularly in their understanding and application of the design process because their previous design and technology experiences have been limited and do not allow high levels to be achieved.
146. In 1999 all Year 11 pupils were entered for a short course in design and technology and results were above the national average. GCSE results in 2000 were also above the national average. A-level results were below national expectations. Attainment in lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form was above national standards. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys.
147. In relation to their prior learning, pupils in Years 7 and 8 achieve well in lessons demonstrating a good and increasing knowledge of the designing process, how to research using a range of techniques and an understanding of range of materials and their properties. Practical making skills in food and textiles are good with pupils confidently and competently using tools and equipment in order to produce quality products. Skills in resistant materials and graphics are weak but pupils now have access to these aspects of design and technology and are developing sound skills, for example, in shaping, joining and finishing techniques in wood and plastic; in using computer assisted design and developing perspective drawing. In Years 7 to 9 the evaluative process and the use of appropriate evaluative language is weak, and particularly so in Year 9.
148. In Year 11 many pupils now produce course work of a good standard and make good progress in lessons. Previous inadequacies within the design and technology department have hindered overall progress in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Current Year 10 pupils, however, are making good progress in their chosen material area. They demonstrate a range of planning and making skills, and testing and recording techniques. They also show an increasing understanding of information technology applications, industrial development processes and their implications on society.
149. Overall pupils achieve well including pupils of lower ability. However, the most able were not always sufficiently challenged in all lessons seen.
150. Teaching is a strength of the department and has a positive impact on learning. In all

lessons observed teaching was effective with teachers demonstrating good subject knowledge and good lesson planning which enabled pupils to make good progress. Some of the double lessons, however, are split over break and this creates difficulties for continuity of learning. A good range of teaching styles is used, creating a variety of learning opportunities for pupils. These opportunities allow pupils to explore and investigate problems, use their initiative to find solutions and develop independence and take an increased responsibility for their learning.

151. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are interested in the subject and actively seek to develop their work beyond the initial requirements of the task. They are motivated and eager to succeed. These positive attitudes which are fostered and developed by teachers have a very positive impact on learning. Extended verbal responses are expected from teachers' questions and pupils are able to present their work well and use appropriate technical language. They are confident and competent users of information technology which is used and applied in constructive ways to support and develop their learning.
152. Whilst individual lesson plans and some material specific units are good, there is no coherent scheme of work for the subject. Teachers lack the guidance of a detailed scheme of work mapped to the National Curriculum programme of study that clearly integrates shared aspects of designing and making, identifies learning objectives and assessment opportunities, and suggests activities for pupils of a range of abilities.
153. The department recognises that current assessment procedures are in need of further development. It has included this issue in its development plan. Marking is regular but the use of written diagnostic and constructive comments to support pupils in improving their work is limited.
154. The curriculum time allocation for this subject is low. This restricts the pupils' opportunities and the depth of knowledge they acquire. This has a negative impact on pupils attaining higher order skills and knowledge to allow them to achieve the higher grades at GCSE.
155. The newly appointed head of department has vision and direction for the department and has identified relevant issues in the department's improvement plan. Other members of the department share the vision and direction. Significant improvements have taken place in a short time and sound foundations are in place for the development and effective delivery of the design and technology curriculum.
156. Staffing and learning resources are well suited and deployed to promote learning. There is good quality technical support. Accommodation for material areas with the exception of textiles is good. The workshop area has no floor markings to indicate safe working areas around machinery. The textiles room is inadequate but the school has plans in place to provide an appropriate area for the teaching of this aspect of design and technology.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

157. Attainment was well above average by age 14 in 1999, based on assessments made by teachers and has improved again in Summer 2000. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels is also well above national figures for 1999. The attainment of boys was

below that of girls but both achieved higher than nationally expected levels. In the 2000 GCSE examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national figures for all schools. The percentage attaining the highest grades A\*-A was also above the national figure. All entries have attained a grade A\*-G for several years. There is no evident difference between boys' and girls' performance and pupils often do better in geography than in their other subjects.

158. The number of students taking A-level GCE in geography is very small. Results show students perform well in comparison with other subjects.
159. In work seen, the standards achieved by the age of 14 are above that expected nationally. For example, pupils understand the dynamic processes that shape and change the surface of the earth. They understand how the movement of the earth's crust is a response to plate tectonics and how and why earthquakes and volcanoes can cause immense impact. Pupils are beginning to describe interactions between the physical and human environment and the resulting geographical patterns.
160. At age of 16, standards achieved in work seen are in line with and often above national expectations for pupils of the same age. Pupils use standard geographical terminology with confidence. They select and use appropriate fieldwork techniques and means of analysis to produce high quality coursework. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are sound. Higher attaining pupils evaluate coursework evidence effectively, pointing out the shortcomings of their own enquiry methodology.
161. Standards seen in the A-level work are in line with national averages. Students can demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the variables influencing temperature variations at the earth's surface. They use the analytical methods through which geographers model hydrological systems and population growth with confidence. A particular strength is their understanding of the principles of geographical investigation. The relative weakness in performance in physical geography is being addressed.
162. Geography makes a sound contribution to literacy through the use of key words. Speaking and listening skills are strengths for most pupils and teachers make good use of these. For example, in Year 12 a discussion about the population policy in China led to responses which delved into the moral and ethical dimensions of human rights and how different peoples' values and attitudes affect contemporary social, economic and political issues. Opportunities to use numeracy skills, are taken where appropriate.
163. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall representing a balance of significant strengths and some underlying weaknesses. All teachers show good knowledge and understanding of their subject which they use effectively to extend pupils' learning. Where teaching is good the clarity of explanation and exposition, and re-enforcement of geographical terms enables pupils to produce work of accuracy and good quality. For instance, Year 8 pupils were challenged by demanding and probing questions when considering key factors influencing farming in the Ganges Valley. The outcomes demonstrated significant gains in pupils' understanding. In Year 9 lively interactions between teacher and pupils drew out a range of knowledge, perceptions and feelings about the impact of a volcanic eruption. This was followed with a video clip and an activity which looked for explanation and causality,



linking patterns of land movements around the globe. More able pupils were able to present well developed summary conclusions.

164. Teaching approaches and methodology are generally satisfactory, although at times they are inappropriate. On some occasions learning opportunities in lessons do not offer sufficient flexibility and extension for the more able pupils to use higher order thinking and writing skills. The small group of pupils on the special educational needs register make satisfactory progress but need greater support to achieve the learning goals. In the sixth form students are over reliant on their teacher.
165. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, responding to general quality and effort. Comments in pupils' books in Years 7 to 11 provide insufficient specific guidance about how to do better. This limits their ability to take greater responsibility for their learning and their understanding of how to improve. However, a significant strength of teaching is the way pupils are encouraged to pose and investigate geographical questions, applying skills and understanding through direct enquiry. The best work is analytical and makes very good use of diagrams, maps and data. Less successful studies tend to be descriptive.
166. A particular strength of the work of the department is the homework structured around investigations and enquiry. This enables pupils to apply skills and display initiative and independence, competence and confidence in using information technology to organise and present their findings and conclusions. Homework makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
167. Pupils form good relationships between themselves and with the teacher. They have a capacity for and interest in independent study which capitalises on their intellectual curiosity. In class pupils are responsive and keen to learn. As a consequence of teaching, very good behaviour and good personal attitudes, pupils including those from minority ethnic heritage make good progress overall throughout their geographical studies.
168. Departmental management is satisfactory. Strengths lie in operational effectiveness, strong team work, and most significantly in the evident uncompromising commitment to improvement and development. The department's development plan is consistent with school priorities and has identified the main weaknesses to be addressed. However, there are weaknesses in the schemes of work and assessment practice in order to raise pupil performance and in the strategic leadership of the department. The department does not yet fully monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. At present information and communication technology is under utilised to aid learning in school and for management purposes. Learning resources are inadequate in range and quality to provide appropriately challenging learning opportunities for all pupils.

## **HISTORY**

169. GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average. In 2000, GCSE results improved, exceeding the very high standards of the previous eight years. Standards by age 14 in 1999 were well above the national average. In 2000 there has been an increase in attainment overall, but in particular in the higher levels achieved. All pupils taking GCSE make good progress. Pupils on the register of special educational needs and those with

English as a second language make satisfactory progress up to age 14 and good progress up to age 16 years. Standards achieved at A-level are very high. Although sixth form numbers are small, the history department has had 100% pass rate over three of the past four years.

170. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. For example, by age 14 years, pupils are able to write detailed accounts about, 'How the treatment of the Jews changed in Germany from 1933-1945,' and, 'The causes of the First World War in 1914'. By age 16 years, pupils are able to do extensive personal research into the different tactics used by both sides in their study of Vietnam. The work achieved by sixth form students is very good. Students write excellently, considering, 'To what extent was the failure of the Spanish Armada due to superior English naval technology', and, 'To what extent did Thomas Cromwell revolutionise English government in the 1530s.'
171. The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons observed was at least good and often very good. The strength of the department is the teaching of pupils to develop the skills which are used by historians. In very good lessons teachers set very clear objectives, provide historical content that is accurate and reflects up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the periods, events and personalities being studied. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and use good historical terminology, sharing appropriate key words to be used in the pupils' work.
172. Particularly effective are the different strategies used in Years 7 to 9. For example, a video clip from the film, 'Titanic,' was used to help students decide how reliable is the extract from the film if one wants to find out about the tragedy. Also very effective was when the teacher changed his role, and as an artist answered in depth questions about his work on the Reformation. Pupils quickly learn the position of the Catholic Church during this period through understanding what the imagery he used represents, particularly that of a dragon, a monastery, a lamb, the wind and its effect on a tree. Pupils also enjoyed a role-play of the happenings in the sixteenth century. This helped the pupils sequence the wives of Henry VIII and understand some of the events of his life.
173. Teaching is also very good in the sixth form. Students are helped to understand better how to answer questions on the exam paper, through an activity which matches the source to its potential advantages, what they reveal, to possible limitations and questions to consider. For example, this strategy was linked to a question about Calvin, from an exam paper on the advantages and limitations of an extract about the support for Calvinism in France in the 1560s. After carrying out the task, students understood what is required to receive full marks. Teachers also help students to improve their essay writing skills through studying extracts from A-level history examiners' reports. Students identify the qualities examiners are looking for in essays and are given advice on how they can improve their performance. The students then marked an exam question on 'How serious a threat to Elizabeth 1 was Mary Queen of Scots?' to test this and were provided with a very good crib sheet, 'Assessing My Advanced Level Essay' for future use. In the one ineffective lesson, the pace was slow, there was over long discussion and no challenge and little learning took place.

174. Pupils' attitudes to history are very good; relationships in all lessons are very good. Pupils work well in pairs and in groups. Pupils on the register of special educational needs as well as those with English as a second language are taught well. Teachers support their learning well by ensuring that tasks are matched to their capabilities.
175. The curriculum experiences for students are enhanced through fieldwork and site visits and these also enhance learning by giving students more opportunity for independent investigation and enquiry. Independent writing begins in Year 7 when the students are asked to produce a piece of work on, 'The New Roman Woman.' Pupils begin to understand the marking procedures and to identify where their evidence matches the curriculum level and what is required in order to receive full marks. Homework is used effectively to extend and reinforce learning in most lessons.
176. Teachers in the department are competent and confident with the teaching of information technology. Its use enhances the subject through presentation and research and is used for the pupils' personal studies, which are of the highest quality. There are time-tabled slots within the information technology suite and the department has begun to draw up plans to develop information technology across all units in the curriculum. There is no opportunity, however, for in class use and research, and there is no evidence of monitoring, assessing and recording pupils' progress in information technology as yet.
177. The leadership of the department is good and high standards have been maintained. Assessment practices are well developed in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form but there is limited use made of assessment to set targets for pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9. The department does not yet fully monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of its work.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

178. Standards overall are high. Statutory assessment by teachers of 14 year olds' work in 1999 and 2000 indicates high attainment when compared to national expectations. GCSE results are well above the national average but the number of candidates entered for GCSE is relatively small. In 1999 85% of the pupils entered for GCSE achieved A\*-C, this rose to 100% in 2000.
179. Results at A-level were above the national average in 1999 and 2000 but again the numbers taking examinations were small. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils following GCSE and A-level courses.
180. Pupils' information technology capability on entry to the school is low. Pupils come from a large range of primary schools and have received variable information technology experiences. During Years 7 to 9 pupils develop the computing skills of logging on, loading, printing and saving using a number of generic software applications. They can use a word processor, database and spreadsheet packages with confidence. They are developing research skills using search engines on the Internet and sending and receiving E-mail.

181. A small proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not currently receiving their entitlement to the full programme of study of information technology. Those following the GCSE course make sophisticated use of the software available. Many of these pupils become skilled in the creation and use of Access databases, mind mapping techniques and applying their skills to real life situations for GCSE and A-level course work. They move easily between generic applications and are able to answer questions related to their information technology activities with confidence. For example, sixth form students are studying translations using MS-DOS rather than Windows software.
182. There are clear and detailed course notes available to pupils on the school's intranet shared area to help develop their information technology skills and their ability as independent learners. This is beginning to be an effective strategy in developing pupils' skills as learners but a small number of pupils are still over reliant on the teacher. In lessons in Years 7 to 11 lessons there is a small range of measuring and control activities in science, design and technology and information technology.
183. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good lessons throughout the school. Subject specialists teach the subject and their enthusiasm and knowledge are shared with pupils, having a positive effect on the standards pupils achieve. Lessons are well planned with clear and achievable objectives, which are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and reviewed at the end of the lesson to ensure pupils have understood the work. Relationships in lessons are very good, pupils enjoy using information technology and work to achieve the high standards their teachers expect of them.
184. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils and pupils on the school's register of special educational needs achieve similar results to their peers. Dyslexic pupils make good use of information technology. It helps them achieve success which motivates them to stay on task for longer. Within information technology lessons teachers use an effective range of teaching styles including multimedia presentations, demonstrations and class teachings. Coursework tasks in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form are open-ended and are very effectively supported by local industries. Teachers use individual support and discussion effectively to help pupils achieve high standards. Teachers also make good use of the resources available including the computer projector, web cameras and printed resources held in the public shared area. Teaching is less effective, however, when teachers direct the lesson minute by minute for too long or spend a long time talking to the whole class.
185. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and often the progress is good. Pupils are able to describe what they are going to do and why. They use technical language in their work and know what these words mean. Work in pupils' folders and in their user areas on the school's intranet, shows progress over time. The unit booklets used in Years 7 to 9 help pupils to know what they are expected to learn during the module. They involve the pupils in self- assessment and enable them to monitor their own progress. Appropriate homework is set regularly and checked. This has a positive effect on the standards pupils achieve.
186. Pupils regularly use word processing applications well for course work and presentation in a range of subjects including English, history, and design and technology. Most pupils have

access to modern computer systems at home and the computer rooms are available lunchtime and after school.

187. The department is well led, there is an effective department handbook and a well documented scheme of work with some assessment criteria. The department's handbook gives clear advice on matching work to pupils' abilities but there was little evidence of this in lessons during the inspection. The department's development plan includes the priorities identified in the whole school development plan. The plan has clear actions to be taken and a scheduled self-review. The information technology technician manages the network efficiently and provides effective support to staff and pupils. The head of department has started to monitor the quality of teaching within the department, but this has yet to be formalised. There is also a system for tracking the progress of pupils in Year 9 but this is in the early stages of development and has not as yet impacted on standards.
188. The school has received funds from the National Grid for Learning and has added considerably to these to provide two networked computer rooms and internet access. A further grant secured by the school has provided 20 laptop computers connected via a radio local area network (LAN) for cross-curricular use. However, the use of information technology in other subjects of the curriculum is very limited.
189. There is a range of extra-curricular information technology activities available at lunchtimes and after school which are well attended. There is a popular C+ programming club at lunchtime, opportunities to build a computer, a homework club and other extra-curricular opportunities to use information technology. These help to raise pupils' standards of achievement across the school, broadens their information technology experiences and helps them to understand the theory aspect of examination work.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

190. Teachers' assessments of 14 year olds in French indicate that the majority of pupils are reaching the nationally expected level or higher, with virtually all pupils attaining at least the expected level in 2000. This is very high compared to the national average. For the last three years the percentage of pupils attaining Grades A\*-C at GCSE in French has been significantly above the national average. The results have improved over the last three years and the results for 2000 are very high compared to the national average, with a high proportion of pupils gaining A\* and A grades. The percentage of pupils attaining Grades A\*-C in Spanish has been very high compared to the national average for the last three years, with a very high proportion of pupils gaining A\* and A grades. Taking account of prior attainment at for pupils in Years 7 to 9, most pupils achieve well for their ability. However, in both French and Spanish those achieving below their potential are predominantly boys. Results in Spanish have been consistently in line with, or better than, results for other subjects within the school. Results in French have recently improved.
191. A-level results in French and Spanish reflect the full range of grades. Over the last three years most students have obtained at least a pass grade and some have attained higher grades. The number of students is too small to make secure comparisons with national results.

192. All pupils learn French from Year 7 and start Spanish as a second language in Year 8. In lessons in Years 7 to 11 in French and Spanish, pupils are attaining well in comparison to national expectations. Most pupils have a good and often very good understanding of spoken French or Spanish. For example, in a Year 11 Spanish class, pupils understood and responded confidently to complex language spoken at normal speed. Pupils generally have a secure grasp of language previously learnt. In Years 7 and 8 pupils are able to ask and answer basic personal questions and express opinions. In a number of classes pupils have good pronunciation. In some classes in Years 10 and 11 there is a high level of accuracy in pupils' spoken language, with correct verb formation and agreements. Many pupils use a good range of language. For example, in a Year 11 French class, pupils responded with confident and accurate answers to questions on a range of topics, including unpredictable questions. In a game in a Year 10 Spanish class, pupils gave accurate answers using a range of language and tenses. However, pupils rarely use the target language spontaneously or for classroom communication.
193. Pupils understand written French and Spanish at an appropriate level. However, they are not given the opportunity for independent reading. Writing is a weakness throughout Years 7 to 11 and pupils' written work does not reflect their capabilities. Writing tasks are mainly limited to copying phrases and answering questions. Extended writing is usually based on a model text. Pupils do not have the opportunity to write using more complex language or for a variety of purposes, including creative and imaginative writing. Many pupils produce very accurate writing, but some work is consistently inaccurate with no improvement over time.
194. In general, boys and girls are achieving similar high standards in lessons in all skill areas except writing, where boys' work often contains careless mistakes. Pupils generally make at least satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 11 and good progress in the sixth form. Pupils for whom English is as an additional language are making good progress. Pupils on the school's register of special educational need are making sound progress.
195. Standards in A-level lessons are at least satisfactory across the skills and some individual students demonstrate very high standards. Students have good oral skills and good understanding of the spoken language. For example, Year 13 Spanish students speak fluently and accurately employing a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.
196. Behaviour in language lessons is excellent. Throughout the school, boys and girls have positive attitudes to language learning and are attentive and keen to participate.
197. Teaching in most lessons throughout the school is at least satisfactory, with teaching in half of lessons seen being good or better. In a 21% lessons seen teaching is very good or excellent. In 16% of lessons seen throughout the school there was unsatisfactory teaching. This is an unacceptably high proportion and was found in the teaching of French. Planning is usually satisfactory and the best planning provides for motivating activities in an appropriate sequence, which enable pupils to develop secure use of a new language. In all lessons teachers share the learning objectives with pupils and have very good classroom management and good relationships with pupils. Teachers encourage pupils and give positive feedback. There are other good features in many lessons. For example, teachers use skilful questioning to elicit extended answers and a range of language from pupils. They

provide a range of motivating activities, which give sufficient practice for pupils to use language independently with confidence. There is a lively teaching style and brisk pace, with opportunities for active participation by pupils. Teachers create an atmosphere where pupils can make mistakes, but do not feel that they have failed. The target language is used to a varying extent. It is used very effectively in some lessons, with pupils being exposed to a rich language environment.

198. In unsatisfactory lessons, the activities provided do not ensure learning and do not give sufficient practice of the new language to ensure that pupils have a sufficiently secure grasp. In some lessons there is a lack of support for less able and insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are not offered all the opportunities within the National Curriculum programmes of study, in particular opportunities for breadth of study. For example, pupils have little opportunity to read and listen independently or for personal interest or to use language creatively and imaginatively. There are rare opportunities to use information technology. In some classes in Years 10 and 11 there is an unsatisfactorily tight focus on preparing for the examination, which leads to a phrase book approach. As a result, pupils are not exposed to a rich language learning experience with an appropriate development of grammatical understanding.
199. Assessment is a weakness and is recognised as such by the heads of the departments. There is no assessment of pupils against the levels of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Levels given by teachers for the statutory teacher assessment of standards by age 14 for French are not based on a range of evidence or on a formal process of assessment and moderation using the national criteria. Marking is generally weak in French, with most work marked with ticks, an occasional single comment or a mark. These strategies do not help pupils to improve the standards of their work. In Spanish extended positive comments are more frequent. Some guidance on how to improve is given by some teachers in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. In general, however, pupils are given no clear indication of how well they are doing overall and how to improve.
200. Although the head of French and head of Spanish work well together and collaboration and consistency have increased recently, there is no overall leadership of modern foreign languages issues within the school. This is weakening the impact of the subject and the focus on improving standards. The two heads of departments are aware of the major weaknesses within the two departments and are keen to take action to address them. The schemes of work for both subjects provide a basic framework for teaching and include lists of topics and language points. They do not, however, address the matching of work for pupils of different abilities, progression of learning year on year, assessment of pupils' standards, the development of language learning skills or ensure provision of all aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study. The current departmental plan identifies appropriate priorities and reflects objectives within the school development plan, but there is not a clear focus on improving pupils' outcomes. Strategies for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the department are limited.

## **MUSIC**

201. Standards achieved by age 14 and 16 are above national averages. Teachers' assessments for 14 year olds indicate that overall, girls attain better than boys and this reflects the

national picture. In 1999, most A-level candidates achieved higher grades in music than in their other subjects. The small number of entries for music makes year on year and national comparisons of limited value.

202. Pupils take their work seriously and demonstrate positive attitudes. Behaviour is often very good. They enjoy good relationships with the teachers and with each other. They are keen to learn and often extend their learning through activities at home, based on homework tasks provided by the teacher.
203. All of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory with some good lessons being observed. In lessons throughout the school, teachers use good questioning techniques to extend and consolidate learning. In group and individual activities, teachers provide good individual support for pupils. A strength of the teaching is the focus on the use of correct terminology. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher effectively probed pupils' understanding of key words, and then expected them to use these words in their group discussions.
204. In all lessons observed in Years 7 to 9, the teacher used recorded music to develop or consolidate a body of knowledge and then asked pupils to apply it in a practical context. Where the practical activity focuses on specific musical techniques which have been explored and discussed, learning is good. This was effective in a Year 9 lesson on variation techniques and in a Year 10 lesson on drum rhythms. Sometimes the practical activity lacks the focus to enable this link to be capitalised on to best effect and learning is less effective. For example, a Year 7 group considered the kinds of starting points which composers used. They then began to compose a piece representing autumn. Pupils found it hard to apply the discussion to their compositional work and many groups wrote lists of sounds without showing understanding of the techniques needed to frame them into a compositional structure.
205. Pupils have opportunities to work at a level appropriate to their ability in practical work in lessons in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, many pupils who play musical instruments have composed using them. Some have used information technology to create compositions. In the lessons observed, pupils were finding their own level using their instruments.
206. The flexible use of listening awareness sheets supports the development of pupils' understanding. Teachers discuss and repeat questions as appropriate to improve pupils' responses. In a good lesson with Year 11, the teacher had identified a listening question from the GCSE paper in which pupils were underachieving and taught strategies for improving their answers to the questions. By the end of the lesson, pupils were more confident and achieving greater success.
207. There are no activities specifically designed to stretch the more able in lessons and this provides them with greater challenge. In some lessons observed, the work was not matched to pupils' abilities and talents. For example, in an A-level lesson, there was a wide range of aural ability evident but students were working on the same sequence of exercises. In a Year 11 lesson, which took place in an information technology room, a group of 11 pupils were using the Cubase programme to support the compositional



process. Some pupils understood and capitalised on this opportunity, but others found the resource inappropriate to the type of composition they were developing.

208. Teaching does not develop instrument-specific skills and some pupils struggle to articulate their ideas on the keyboard. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their singing voices. They sing as part of the project approach but there is insufficient focus on improvement.
209. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9. Taped evidence demonstrates a considerable step forward from Year 8 to Year 9. By the end of Year 9, some pupils can use interweaving parts, harmony and a range of standard techniques of variation.
210. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The two full time members of staff work effectively as a team. There is a lack of strategic long term planning. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the department and is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The year by year development planning process does not enable a long term planning cycle to be implemented. Also some development objectives lack clear success criteria making it hard to measure whether they have been met within the relatively short space of time within which they are planned to be achieved.
211. The department has a scheme of work which is used to inform teaching. The scheme provides a useful framework but lacks detail of learning objectives particularly in relation to the development of specific skills. Assessment processes are in place although pupils' progress is not clearly tracked across in Years 7 to 9 and there is little evidence of individual target setting. Data relating to instrumental skills is updated on an annual basis but there is no system of tracking progress in classroom work. Marking criteria are shared with pupils although in Years 7 to 9 they are too broadly framed to be of use to help pupils know what is to be achieved. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are provided with helpful feedback on their work, along with guidance on ways in which they can improve.
212. Pupils' progress in lessons is adversely affected when the lesson is interrupted by a twenty-minute break. The departmental accommodation is unsatisfactory. The rooms are spread around the school: practice facilities are not readily available for group work, and the second music room is too small for larger groups. The department has a good stock of keyboards, but lacks quality acoustic instruments. The organisation of keyboards in rows sometimes inhibits the effectiveness of group activities. There are no instruments from other cultures to enable pupils to explore unfamiliar sound sources and styles.
213. Pupils are given opportunities to take lessons in singing and on a wide range of instruments. Private teachers operate on the school premises and work independently, dealing directly with pupils. They enjoy good relationships with the music department and also play a significant part in the running of extra-curricular activities. However their work is not closely linked to the work of the department as an extension of the curriculum.
214. Music enjoys a very positive profile in the school. This is reflected in the very high numbers of pupils opting to pursue music in Years 10 and 11 and beyond. One third of the Year 10 cohort are undertaking the GCSE course. Music plays a valued part in school life because of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. All practices are at lunchtime and

this sometimes offers limited opportunity for in-depth rehearsal. Teachers who lead groups draw on their own specialised expertise to train and rehearse, developing groups to a high standard. Performances are a regular feature of school life. This enrichment of pupils' experiences and the personal benefits gained by pupils are much appreciated by parents.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

215. Standards in physical education overall are at least satisfactory. Standards by age 14 years are at least average when compared to national expectations. Standards at GCSE are above the national average for physical education. Standards of achievement in the sixth form are also satisfactory. In 1999 and 2000 all pupils entered for A-level achieved a grade but the numbers entered were very small. The number of pupils following both GCSE and A-level is small at present but is beginning to grow as examination results continue to improve. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have not opted for the GCSE course have a narrow range of activities – games and athletics, due to the limited time available to these pupils. Standards achieved by these pupils are generally high.
216. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory with a number of good lessons throughout the school. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are taught by specialist physical education teachers, which has a strong impact on the standards they achieve. Members of the specialist team, supplemented by a number of other keen staff who teach games in Years 10 and 11, are enthusiastic and committed to achieving high standards. Lessons are tightly managed and well planned with clear learning objectives which help pupils' develop their skills and understanding. Pupils are taught in fairly small groups, which has a positive impact on the standards. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are well integrated in their teaching groups and their need are well met. In Year 9 a pupil with co-ordination difficulties is well supported by the teacher and peer group, achieving standards similar to other pupils. Pupils who achieve well in an aspect of physical education are encouraged to represent the school and a significant number of pupils are involved in teams outside school, many at county level.
217. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils. Relationships in lessons are very good. The number and range of activities is a strength of the department. Lessons are well planned with lesson objectives, which can be achieved by all, and extension activities for the more proficient or skilful. Teachers make good use of questioning to check and develop pupils' understanding in both practical and theory lessons. The skills of teamwork are encouraged, Year 7 pupils involved in orienteering around school are able to identify the need to work as team and the benefits this brings.
218. Lessons always start with a warm-up activity and most finish with a warm down, and most pupils understand the need for this. There is a clear assessment scheme and pupils are assessed at the end of each block of work. Self assessment is beginning to take place but this process has yet to be formalised. Pupils have an understanding of what they can do but they are given few opportunities in lessons to evaluate their own or the performance of others. Teaching is ineffective when the teacher prescribes the course of the lesson too tightly and pupils have limited time to explore sequences, practise skills further or evaluate their own performance.

219. Pupils make good progress in some lessons, and satisfactory progress in others. They use key words and know the meaning and sense of these. Pupils are confident when using equipment, for example, Year 7 pupils handle stopwatches while orienteering with ease. Hand to eye co-ordination is well developed through the range of activities offered during Years 7 to 9 including basketball, volleyball and badminton. Pupils continue to develop their expertise during Years 10 and 11 and the pupils following examination courses develop an understanding of the body, how it works and the effects of sport upon the body. Pupils are well prepared for physical education lessons and most participate well in lessons. Pupils enjoy their lessons, they change quickly and soon become engaged in learning. They work hard with practices to develop their skills further.
220. The department has good resources in terms of equipment for games but accommodation is limited and this has a negative impact on the standards pupils achieve in some aspects of physical education. The gym is small and the on site field quickly becomes waterlogged. The school timetable also has a negative impact on pupils' achievement. During the morning some pupils have a lesson which goes over break. This means that learning time is lost as pupils have to cool down, then warm up again and then resume their activities.
221. The school has access to very good off site playing fields but these are a walk of 15 minutes away from the school, across a busy main road. To make full use of this facility, games lessons are time-tabled over three lessons. For some pupils this is a long time to stay focused and some pupils become tired before the end of the lesson. This has a negative effect upon their learning
222. The department is well led and managed, staff are caring and work well as a team. They have taken a number of training courses to ensure their knowledge is up to date. Teachers meet regularly to share good practice and the outcomes of assessment activities. There is a well-planned and detailed department handbook available for staff use. Monitoring of teaching and learning is only just beginning and is not well developed. The department is aware of the need to formalise this process quickly and has recently purchased a computer to help with department administration and keeping records of pupils' progress.
223. There are a large number of extra curricular activities available to pupils, these are well supported and have a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve and the ethos of the school.