

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN HOUGHTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 113000

Headteacher: Mr B Monaghan

Reporting inspector: Mrs V Lynch
1475

Dates of inspection: 11th – 15th September 2000

Inspection number: 224002

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Stocks
Date of previous inspection:	5 th December 1994

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V Lynch 1475	Registered inspector	Physical Education Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
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A Fraser 10561	Team inspector	Science	
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S Jones 22501	Team inspector	Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John Houghton is an 11 to 16 voluntary aided comprehensive school situated in Kirk Hallam, on the outskirts of Ilkeston. Three-quarters of pupils come from three partner catholic primary schools. The remaining 25 per cent are pupils whose parents have chosen for their children to be educated within the Christian ethos of a catholic school. These pupils come from up to 22 other primary schools. The school has 599 pupils and is small when compared with other secondary schools, despite growing steadily over the last five years. It is popular with parents and is over-subscribed. A new headteacher started at the school at the beginning of the term.

The school has very few ethnic minority pupils and there are no pupils who need support for English as an additional language. These figures are very low when compared to the national picture. There are slightly more girls than boys in the school. Seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average.

Key Stage 2 results of pupils for the 1999 entry indicate that there were more higher attaining pupils than is usual. Key Stage 2 results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were slightly better than the national average. The ability profile of pupils when they enter the school does vary between years and sometimes the average National Curriculum level has been slightly below the national average.

Two point five per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. This is in line with the national average. A further 10.9 per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register. These figures are well below the national average. Very few pupils on the special educational needs register have behavioural difficulties: most have specific or moderate learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St John Houghton School is a good school with many strengths. Examination and test results are often better than the national average and pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are exceptionally good. Staff show outstanding care and concern for pupils. Although some aspects of management are unsatisfactory the impact of these is limited because staff always do their best for pupils. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Results in English, mathematics and science are above the national average.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Teaching is good or better in a high percentage of lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work are very good.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are exceptional.
- There is good provision for pupils' personal development.
- Everyone works within the mission and ethos established by the previous headteacher.

What could be improved

- The collection, analysis and use of assessment information and data.
- Planning for and the implementation of strategies to support boys' achievement.
- Attainment in modern foreign languages.
- The development and use of new technology to support both learning and administration.
- Strategic and financial planning and monitoring and evaluation.
- The involvement of senior and middle managers in the leadership and management of the school.
- The curriculum at both key stages.

The inspection was carried out at the same time as a Section 23 inspection¹. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

¹ Because the school is a voluntary aided Roman catholic school the inspection of religious education and collective worship was carried out under Section 23 of the School's Inspection Act (Denominational Education) by the inspector approved by the Diocese and appointed by the governing body.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Results in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations have improved but the key issues from the previous inspection have not been systematically worked on. The action plan has not been sufficiently monitored. Consequently some of the points listed have not provided the springboard for some key management developments that in other schools are much further advanced.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 year olds and 16 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
Key Stage 3	C	B	B	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
GCSE examinations	B	B	C	D	

Standards overall at the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE examinations are always in line or better than the national average. This is despite a significant variation year by year in the attainment of pupils on entry, which is sometimes below the national average. Results in Key Stage 3 tests and in the GCSE examinations in 2000 are considerably better than the results in 1999². Only GCSE results in modern foreign languages are consistently below the national average.

Although the school does well when compared with all schools, results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 3 were below, and in GCSE examinations results were well below, those in similar schools according to national data. The inspection team believes that the grades given for comparison with similar schools do not reflect the progress that pupils make or the work seen during the inspection and have changed these grades accordingly. The improvement in results in 2000 is such that they should compare well with similar schools.

Test and examination results over time are improving in line with the improvements nationally but results do not improve year on year and are affected by the attainment of pupils on entry to the school. The school has set targets but because it does not have a clear policy on the collection, analysis and use of assessment information these targets are not based on accurate predictions for individual pupils.

Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 are at least satisfactory and are often good, with the exception of music and modern foreign languages. The main reason for the unsatisfactory standards in music is the lack of time in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 standards of work seen are also at least satisfactory and often good. Standards in modern foreign languages remain unsatisfactory. All pupils make satisfactory progress and pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and to all that the school provides. They are enthusiastic and enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils are unfailingly courteous and considerate to each other and adults.
Personal development and relationships	Exceptionally good: high quality relationships between all members of the school community support pupils' personal development.
Attendance	Good: almost all pupils attend regularly. This helps pupils make the most of the opportunities that the school provides.

² At the time of publication there are no 2000 national average figures available so comparisons are made with 1999.

The most significant features of the school are the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils and the very high quality of the relationships throughout the whole school community. This ensures the whole community can get on with the business of teaching and learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

There has been a considerable improvement in teaching across both key stages with the result that overall 98 per cent of lessons are satisfactory or better. Two-thirds of lessons observed were good and almost one in five lessons were very good or excellent. At the time of the previous inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons. Because of this high proportion of lessons that are satisfactory or better pupils make good gains in their learning. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is always satisfactory and in two-thirds of lessons in these subjects it was good or better. Teaching is a strength in most subjects and particularly in art, history, religious education and in the National Skills Profile course, where it is always good or better.

Across the curriculum the teaching of literacy is good even though a whole school approach is still emerging. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is not as well developed. Whilst subject departments are aware of the need to promote numeracy skills, lesson observation provided little evidence of these skills being used or taught. There is insufficient information and communications technology taught across the curriculum because of the lack of resources.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: the quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall although there are imbalances of time in Key Stage 3. Statutory requirements are met with the exception of information and communications technology at both key stages.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: pupils have full access to the national curriculum. Their individual needs are met through high quality individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall: the school makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual development and a very good contribution to their moral and social development. More could be done to prepare pupils for life in our multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is good support for pupils' personal development. The monitoring of and support for pupils' academic progress are not consistent or coherent.

The school is committed to working closely with parents but does not make use of the fact that parents are so supportive and could be more involved as real partners in their children's learning. The school provides a good range of activities both within lessons, during lunch-time and after school. There are weaknesses in the school's provision for information and communications technology. Pupils do not have enough experience of this important aspect in either key stage because there is not enough hardware centrally or in subject areas. The school is very strong in its care for pupils but this does not yet extend to systematically checking that all pupils are making enough progress during their time at the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership of the school has been and continues to be good; however, the systems to support management are weak and should be strengthened to further improve overall standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well aware of the strengths of the school but do not monitor the work of the school sufficiently to be equally aware of its weaknesses. They have taken some key strategic decisions but have not been sufficiently involved in longer term strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Because the school does well in comparison with all schools there has not been the commitment to identify whether it is doing as well as it could.
The strategic use of resources	Money is always well spent, but because there is no long term strategic plan, resources are not systematically allocated to identified priorities.

The leadership of the previous headteacher has successfully created an atmosphere in the school that is valued by pupils, parents and staff and gives the school its uniqueness. However, this has not led to a sufficient focus on raising standards. Although results are good when compared with all schools and pupils make progress, the issue of boys' underachievement has not been systematically tackled. The school has an adequate number of teachers but does not have enough technician support for information and communications technology or science. Accommodation is satisfactory but continues to need improvement. Resources for learning, with the exception of computers, are adequate. The school does not systematically apply the principles of best value to its planning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Their children make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good. • The school is welcoming and listens to parents. • Staff have high expectations of pupils. • The way the school is managed and led. • The way the school helps pupils to grow into mature and responsible young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater consistency in the setting of homework. • Information on pupils' progress. • A greater range of activities outside lessons.

Parents are rightly positive about the quality of education that the school provides. Both returns from the questionnaire and the meeting for parents held before the inspection indicate that parents are generally pleased with the work of the school. Inspectors agree with most of the aspects with which parents expressed satisfaction. Children certainly enjoy school, adopt positive attitudes to their work and are responsible and mature in working with each other and their teachers.

The range of extra curricular activities, including trips and visits, extend the learning of many pupils. Inspectors found a good range bearing in mind that teachers who do such activities have other roles in what is a relatively small school. The inspection team also agree with the views of some parents that they are not sufficiently well informed about their children's' progress. Annual reports give a general picture of each pupil's general progress and development but do not give sufficient detail about each pupil's strengths and areas for improvement in every subject. Homework is set regularly but is managed differently by boys and girls, which largely accounts for the different perceptions of parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Standards overall at the end of Key Stage 3 are better than the national average. Over the last three years results in English, mathematics and science have been consistently better, despite a significant variation year by year. Results in 2000 are considerably better than the results in 1999. In English the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5³, the level expected for pupils at the end of the key stage, improved from 76 per cent to 91 per cent. In mathematics the improvement is from 65 per cent to 72 per cent gaining Level 5 and in science from 66 per cent to 82 per cent. There was also an increase in the percentages of pupils gaining the higher Level 6 in English, mathematics and science. Teacher assessments in non-core subjects for 2000 indicate levels well above the national average which, in modern foreign languages, are not supported by the work seen during the inspection. Assessment of pupils achieving the higher Level 7 in design and technology is not supported by the quality of work seen.

- 2 Although the school does well when compared with all schools, overall results at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were below those in similar schools, according to the national data. Although English results were broadly in line with those in similar schools, results in mathematics were well below and science results were below. The school does not have sufficient data to show conclusively that, although the results were below similar schools, they were what could have been expected on the basis of the attainment of the pupils when they joined the school. The data available did indicate that the year that took the Key Stage 3 tests in 1999 were slightly below the national average on entry with an average level of 3.64 when the level expected at the end of Key Stage 2 is Level 4. Because of this the inspection team agree that results in Key Stage 3 in 1999 were broadly in line with similar schools. The improvement in results in 2000 is such that they should compare very well with similar schools.

- 3 Over the last five years the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C has been above the national average. Results in 2000 are better than those in 1999 with 63 per cent of pupils gaining at least 5 or more A* – C grades compared with 52.2 per cent in 1999. The overall trend has been to improve but as with Key Stage 3 results there is variation year on year. In 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A* - G was slightly below the national average. The average points score⁴ is above the national average. Results in English, maths and science are better than the national average, mathematics significantly so. In art, design and technology and religious education results are all above the national average. Results in geography and business studies are very good when compared with the national average. Results in French, German, history, music and physical education were all below the national average. The small size of the groups and their low prior attainment levels were significant influences on the low standards in history, music and physical education.

³ The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils by the end of Key Stage 3, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining at Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

⁴ The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school.

- 4 As in Key Stage 3, GCSE results in 1999 did not compare well with similar schools according to national data. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* - C was below that in similar schools. The percentage gaining grades A* - G was very low and the average points score well below that in similar schools. Again the school does not have sufficient data to show conclusively that, despite this comparison, pupils did as well as could be expected. Scrutiny of the information available on pupils' reading comprehension when they joined the school in 1994 would indicate there were few higher attaining pupils and a higher proportion were attaining at levels below what could be expected. Because of this the inspection team agrees that results in Key Stage 4 in 1999 were below those in similar schools but not well below.
- 5 At the end of Key Stage 3 girls generally do better than boys in English and mathematics. The situation is reversed in science. The extent of the differences varies year on year. This difference is greater in GCSE results. In 1999 the average points score for girls was 44.0 and for boys was 33.4. Whilst girls did better than girls nationally, boys did slightly worse than boys nationally. Girls have consistently done better than boys over the last five years. Pupils with special educational needs do well in relation to their targets and many gain GCSE accreditation in specific subjects. There are no pupils with English as an additional language nor minority ethnic pupils to make comparisons.
- 6 Pupils' reading is above national expectations in Key Stage 3. They are able to demonstrate understanding of a wide range of texts and even in Year 7 a significant number talk with confident awareness about their reading. Pupils also have a well-developed awareness of the structural and linguistic features of texts. This is the product of explicit teaching of these aspects within English, reinforced by cross-curricular support from subjects such as science and history. In Key Stage 4 pupils attain above national expectations in their reading of non-literary texts, but the school does too little to build on the good work of Key Stage 3 in developing pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for literature. This weakness has a notably adverse effect on the attainment of boys in reading. Pupils with special educational needs make good improvements during their time at the school and become confident readers.
- 7 Pupils' writing is also above national expectations in Key Stage 3. It demonstrates a well-developed sense of who will read it and pupils have a good awareness of how to shape and control their work. This ability to engage the reader's interest leads to some outstanding creative writing in Key Stage 4 by higher attaining pupils. Writing skills are taught explicitly from the beginning of Key Stage 3 and there is a useful emphasis on accuracy in both spelling and punctuation. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from this emphasis, which is re-enforced by support teachers and staff in many subjects.
- 8 Pupils', including those with special educational needs, have very good listening skills. Where there are weaknesses they are quickly remedied by consistent classroom expectations on the part of both teachers and pupils. Pupils use Standard English fluently, though not always with the confidence one might expect. They have little difficulty in explaining a concept clearly or in discussing their learning, but they are given too few opportunities to develop higher order skills in a sustained way. Pupils value the talk and discussion that they experience in a number of subjects, for example, in science but too often their experience of oral language in the classroom is as a passive recipient. Thus, the quality of language as an agent of thought does not match other aspects of pupils' speaking.

- 9 Pupils' numeracy skills are good and support learning in other subjects. They use measurement and weighing confidently in design and technology. In science they manage the calculations required, plot graphs and use statistical skills to present information. In geography they gather and represent statistical information before drawing inferences. There has been an audit of numeracy skills used in subjects other than mathematics. There is a draft policy but as yet there is no coherent whole school approach.
- 10 Standards in information and communications technology are good in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils are able to use word processing, spreadsheets, databases and desktop publishing. They have an appreciation of the audience being addressed as well as some understanding of the use of information and communications technology. All are familiar with and use the Internet. Older pupils in the school have a sound knowledge of information and communications technology but skills gained in Key Stage 3 are developed through their own efforts or the minimal use made in other subjects. Pupils taking the business studies option have the opportunity to make better progress in Key Stage 4 because they have regular access to computers.
- 11 Standards of work seen in Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics, science and information and communications technology are good. Standards in art, design and technology, geography, history and physical education are satisfactory but in music and modern foreign languages they are unsatisfactory. The main reason for the unsatisfactory standards in music is the lack of time in Key Stage 3. This is also a contributory factor to the low standards in modern foreign languages.
- 12 In Key Stage 4 standards of work seen are good in mathematics, science and history and are satisfactory in English, art, design technology, geography, music and physical education. There was insufficient work to be seen in information and communications technology to make a judgement on standards. Standards in modern foreign languages remain unsatisfactory as there is no possibility of catching up on the ground lost in Key Stage 3.
- 13 The school set challenging but unrealistic targets for 2000 which had to be adjusted. Although the school did well in GCSE examinations in 2000 it did not achieve the adjusted target. The more modest targets for 2001 are challenging and realistic. With better use of information and early targeting of individual pupils for support there is no reason why these targets should not be reached or exceeded. Although the school recognises that it does have some very able pupils it has not identified pupils who might be gifted or talented. The attainment of these pupils is not identified and tracked.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 Amongst the most significant and obvious features of the school are the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. Almost all pupils arrive extremely punctually and this conscientious and willing attitude to the beginning of the day characterises their approach to school. They are very loyal towards their school, evidenced by their comments and their appearance. They wear their uniform well and conduct themselves with very high levels of decorum. Their willingness to attend school was evident during the week when the fuel crisis prevented a bus delivering a group of children to school. Fifty of the 70 children affected still managed to get to school, some travelling significant distances.
- 15 Pupils are very interested in their lessons, arriving in classrooms promptly and ready to work. Classrooms are invariably characterised by calm and purposeful activity.

Pupils' interest in work often extends beyond the classroom. A group of Year 11 boys were still buzzing about a marketing investigation related to theme parks as they walked along the school drive. Pupils with special educational needs also work hard and diligently with their teachers as instanced by a group of Year 11 pupils concentrating well on acquiring French words that could be used on a campsite.

- 16 Pupils are very interested in the range of activities that the school provides and join in these with enthusiasm. Over 200 pupils volunteered for the choir for a musical event and pupils from all years are participating in the forthcoming production of Oliver. They were highly motivated by the Millennium Challenge last year, each tutor group raising money for charities and helping others. An exceptionally wide range of stalls and sponsored events were organised. Pupils are very excited and look forward to the annual "Agape" celebration; a mass and formal dinner attended by virtually all the Year 11 pupils and staff and the highlight of pupils' school careers.
- 17 The very good behaviour of the pupils at all times ensures that the whole community can get on with the business of teaching and learning. There are occasions in some lessons and in all assemblies when behaviour is excellent. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and co-operative. They move around the school with very high levels of consideration for others and are equally respectful of property and their environment. Keyboards in a Year 8 music lesson were treated with high levels of care. On the exceptionally few occasions when some pupils do misbehave, the progress of other pupils is not affected. Bullying is very rare and pupils are rightly confident that any aggressive or inappropriate behaviour is dealt with very promptly and sensitively.
- 18 Another very positive characteristic of the school is the very high quality of the relationships throughout the whole school community. The atmosphere created by these very good relationships is a reflection of the school's mission statement. All pupils including those with special educational needs are extremely supportive of one another in class and around the school. Year 7 historians both challenged and supported one another in groups when considering a range of written and visual historical sources that they had worked on for homework. When producing identity cards on computers pupils were helping one another in order to confirm their understanding and improve their skills. They were doing this by sharing ideas and questioning each other.
- 19 Pupils are very sensitive to the needs of other pupils who may be experiencing difficulty with their learning or their physical development. They are very welcoming and show a genuine care and concern for them. They are very kind and considerate towards a group of pupils who visit weekly from a local special school, sharing lunch and working alongside one another in the design and technology area. A high awareness of the feelings and beliefs of others is evident throughout the school community. English pupils in a Year 11 class, exploring the possible feelings of an old lady, were dealing very sensitively and maturely with issues of divorce and the effect on children.
- 20 Relationships between pupils and adults are also very good. Pupils and staff enjoy being together. Exceptionally high levels of harmony exist. A pupil doing impressions of staff and pupils introduced a most enjoyable and moving assembly. This excellent assembly concluded with a pupil and member of staff singing a prayer together. Staff and pupils take pride in the achievements of one another. This was evident in the spontaneous applause generated in assemblies and in the classrooms. Year 11 gymnasts applauded each other when they had completed their trampoline routines. Two members of staff performing a mirror image routine in an assembly were positively received and recognised by the whole school.

- 21 The attitudes, behaviour and relationships which pupils are demonstrating are very good and on occasions excellent. Parents' positive comments about these aspects of the school's ethos are totally justified. These aspects were all at least good at the time of the previous inspection. They are now even better enabling all pupils to focus on their learning and make good progress
- 22 Pupils' and staffs' concern for one another helps pupils' personal development. They are suitably encouraged to have good levels of self-esteem and maturity. They are very willing to accept responsibility when it is offered. Year 9 librarians fulfil their lunchtime duties with pride and enthusiasm. Year 11 pupils are demonstrating very good levels of responsibility. Prefects perform a range of duties well supervising areas of the school and helping manage pupil movement around the school. There is a school council but it does not function regularly and is not yet functioning this year. Pupils do demonstrate good levels of initiative and help and assistance is readily offered.
- 23 Recent downward trends in attendance have been arrested and significant improvement secured during the last year. Pupils are now attending well; the overall figures are good and compare favourably with other schools.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 24 There has been a considerable improvement in teaching across both key stages with the result that overall 98 per cent of lessons are satisfactory or better. Two-thirds of lessons observed were good and almost one in five lessons were very good or excellent. At the time of the previous inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons. There is a direct causal relationship between teaching and learning. The quality of learning in 98 per cent of the lessons observed was at least satisfactory and two-thirds of it was good or better. Unsatisfactory teaching and learning occurred in only a very small number of lessons in both key stages.
- 25 Teaching was mostly good or very good in art, history and religious education. In some lessons in history and physical education it was excellent. With the exception of modern languages the teaching in all subjects was at least sound and most were good. The good teaching is attributable to a number of factors.
- 26 Teachers, in both key stages, have a good knowledge of their subject, which they use well to develop and improve the knowledge and understanding of pupils. They display a confidence to extend pupils' learning and provide a level of challenge that enhances learning. In a Year 11 history lesson considering 'The American Depression' the teacher's knowledge enabled pupils to analyse the information given in a way that developed their understanding of America in the 1930s. The use of subject specific and technical language is well developed in most subjects. In history there is good attention to language, in particular historical terminology. In English there is emphasis on effective communication in speech and writing with strong encouragement for the conventions of Standard English. In art good subject knowledge enhances the learning experience for the full range of abilities.
- 27 The high quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection is underpinned by the competent way in which teachers manage the pupils. Good management is aided by the very good relationships that teachers establish with pupils and that pupils have with other pupils. In art it is evident that pupils are greatly valued as individuals and given opportunities to develop within a structured framework of topics

and activities. Good relationships were observed throughout and in some instances led to a very positive response from pupils when tasks were particularly challenging. In other subjects, for example science, these very good relationships are not always used effectively in order to challenge pupils to achieve the highest performance.

- 28 Teachers in most lessons used a variety of teaching methods that matched the needs of the pupils, maintaining their interest and ensuring motivation. The use of group work, whole class teaching, paired activities and individual research were all features of good lessons that promoted good learning. In English when pupils engaged in a practical activity they are encouraged to think about what they are doing. For example, a Year 7 class working with newspapers explored the link between layout and purpose. Skilfully chosen questions on a worksheet produced focused group discussion, stimulating pupils to think of examples from other sources. In mathematics there is a good range of teaching strategies used with an emphasis on practical work and discussion. For example, some Year 8 pupils were trying to develop a statistical description of a typical volcano given a database of some 30 volcanoes. They discussed different approaches to the problem and for 65 minutes their total focus was on volcanoes, thinking, listening, proposing and saying sometimes "Yes, but.."
- 29 There is often good use of questioning to test and reinforce the learning. In design and technology questioning is used to check understanding and to challenge pupils to justify and apply knowledge. Examples of effective questioning were also seen in geography, mathematics, English, science, physical education and information and communications technology. On occasions, however, teachers missed opportunities to gain valuable information on the quality of learning because they did not use open questioning. When used effectively questioning helps teachers to assess progress and to better understand pupils' needs. This is used particularly well in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, which is always satisfactory and is often good.
- 30 The French department is privileged in having three special needs teachers available to teach the lower sets and individual education plans are, therefore, well adapted to provide targets specific to French. Many, but not all, teachers have taken the high quality objectives in individual education plans and translated them into subject specific targets. The use of these targets is not, however, monitored until the termly review. Some teachers in their review acknowledge that they have not been as conscientious as they might in implementing the plans. Learning support assistants and support teachers provide sensitive and discreet support in lessons. They are also skilful in observing what needs to be done to make sure that pupils with special educational needs gain the most from the lesson. Teaching within the National Skills Profile course in Key Stage 4 is always good and pupils make good gains in the basic skills of communication and numeracy as well as improving their organisational skills, confidence and self-esteem. This is because teaching is very carefully planned to ensure that tasks are real and relevant and lessons well structured in small steps that pupils find challenging but manageable.
- 31 With the exception of history and geography, teachers appear to have difficulty in identifying sufficiently focused learning objectives so pupils do not know exactly what they are doing or why. Objectives recorded in lesson plans are frequently simply examples of pupils' activities and rarely identify specific learning the teacher was targeting. Related to this is the absence of the identification and formulation of targets for pupils who do not have special educational needs. It was evident across all subjects that target setting, if mentioned in departmental planning, is at a very early stage of development. The general absence of target setting links also to the

very varied picture in the quality and effectiveness of assessment. Whilst in some subjects, for example design and technology, mathematics and English, there is good use of formative assessment this is not the case across all subjects and reflects the lack of monitoring of teaching within and across departments. The quality of recording and marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, which again underlines the lack of formal procedures to monitor teacher performance. Comments on pupils' work are positive but often lack sufficient analytical comment to improve pupil achievement. In modern foreign languages good practice is not shared across the department. Where teaching is unsatisfactory there is not enough emphasis on all four skills and pupils lack confidence in speaking.

- 32 Across the curriculum the teaching of literacy is secured well, although the whole school approach is still developing. This move to a whole curriculum perspective is laying good foundations for the future and is already helping to secure pupils' literacy skills. They meet a wide range of challenging texts across the school which pupils respond to with confidence. Even lower attaining pupils accept Shakespearean language and there is much genuine enjoyment of plays such as Macbeth'. The explicit teaching of higher order reading skills is not sufficiently consistent across the school and, therefore, the school does not capitalise on pupil reading skills that are above national expectations. In particular, the lack of a strategy for developing pupils' own ideas and for encouraging their engagement with the detail of demanding language is impeding the achievement of higher attaining pupils and of boys. The ability to evaluate alternative opinions and interpretations also requires systematic development. There have, however, been valuable improvements recently with regard to a much-increased attention to audience, purpose and form. The work of the special educational needs department leads to rapid improvement in reading for pupils who enter the school below Level 4 in English.
- 33 The school has produced a booklet for pupils containing the key words in each subject area. It is an excellent production but has not been cross-checked with the lists from the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils' use of the booklet in lessons indicates its practical usefulness and some of the words are displayed with definitions in subject rooms. These are exceedingly well thought out and phrased, for example, in design and technology. It is unusual to see such a document with a French and German section which supports these languages in their contribution to the development of pupils literacy skills. The word level objectives in the Key Stage 3 framework of objectives for literacy will enable the school to teach this aspect of writing much more systematically. At present there is insufficient linkage with the language and objectives for literacy which pupils are taught in Key Stage 2 so that, for example, pupils meet different definitions of key grammatical terms.
- 34 The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is not well developed. Whilst subject departments are aware of the need to promote numeracy skills, lesson observation provided little evidence of numeracy skills being targeted.
- 35 An area of weakness in basic skills development is information and communication technology. Despite the improvement in equipment access for subject departments remains a problem. Cross-curricular provision is restricted despite the willingness on the part of most teachers to use information and communications technology in their teaching. Planning for information and communications technology is evident in most subject schemes and some areas, for example geography and mathematics, are making use of the additional teaching room. However, areas such as design and technology do not have the equipment to support the use of information and communications technology in their teaching. Overall the teaching of information and

communications technology is unsatisfactory across the curriculum. This is more attributable to the lack of resources than teacher commitment or basic knowledge.

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

- 36 In all subjects homework provides a useful mechanism for supporting and reinforcing learning. It is used well in art where it provides for the development of research skills and the opportunity to develop ideas. In mathematics the department has a policy that ensures the resources are prepared and available to support the regularly set tasks. In English homework is very closely linked to work in class and similarly in design and technology regular homework builds on work in lessons.
- 37 The quality and range of learning opportunities the school provides are good overall. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught in Key Stage 3. In addition all pupils follow a course of personal, social and health education and drama in Year 7. However, as in the previous inspection there is insufficient time for art, music, history, geography and science. The school has made a worthy attempt to diversify provision in modern foreign languages with all pupils learning French and German in Key Stage 3, but there is insufficient time for pupils to study two languages to meet the standards required. The curriculum meets statutory requirements for all subjects except in information and communications technology, music and design and technology.
- 38 In Key Stage 4 all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. However, although pupils have the option to study two languages, too few pupils are opting for this choice to make the course viable. Pupils with special educational needs who take the diocesan certificate in religious education do not have a free choice from the range of design and technology options. There is no provision for vocational qualifications. With the exception of information and communications technology, statutory requirements are met for all subjects.
- 39 Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full range of experiences offered by the school both in terms of the taught curriculum and extra curricular activities. Through the Read On Write Away programme and paired reading, which takes place at the start of the day and at lunch-time, they have the opportunity to develop their basic literacy skills without missing other parts of the curriculum. The National Skills Profile course in Key Stage 4 makes a valuable contribution to the continuing development of basic skills and to building links between school and the world outside. Pupils are encouraged to take certificated courses in Key Stage 4 and many of them gain GCSE accreditation.
- 40 Strategies for developing literacy skills are good. The literacy co-ordinator has worked with each department in the school to identify literacy aspects in each unit of work, based on the QCA document 'Language for Learning'. These are incorporated within departmental schemes and the co-ordinator has whole school oversight of these. They are still phrased in overly generalised language, however, such as "more accurate spelling" and have not acquired the specificity contained within 'Language for Learning'. Literacy skills are well developed as part of the curriculum in English. Teachers in other subjects make valuable contributions by emphasising key words in their teaching and displaying them around the classroom. Design and technology and music departments have produced very useful documents identifying how they contribute to literacy development. The development of numeracy skills is

well catered for in mathematics where many lessons begin with numeracy activities. There is a draft numeracy document and members of the department have attended numeracy training courses. French and German lessons make a much smaller contributions than ought to be the case with very little number or money work and no use of the twenty-four hour clock.

- 41 Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There is good planning for and provision of an extensive range of activities and experiences, especially within modern foreign languages, science, mathematics, English, music, history and physical education. For example, there are well-established exchange visits to France and Germany and an annual trip to France for Year 7 pupils. Year 9 pupils attended the Space Centre in Leicester University to undertake a daylong simulation of a 'Mission to Mars'. Year 7 pupils were involved in 'Who murdered Becky Boyle', a good role-play which teaches the skills of observation, analysis, recording and problem solving necessary for science. There are many performance opportunities for pupils throughout the school year, which involve a large number of pupils, such as the 'Young World' concert at Sheffield Arena and the school productions such as 'Oliver'. The range of lunchtime and after school activities is satisfactory and includes a good range of sports activities, revision and support sessions.
- 42 Equality of opportunity is implicit in most aspects of school life and there are excellent policies on equal opportunities and gender. However, following a whole school in-service day action to overcome boys' underachievement was recommended rather than required and only the mathematics department and the history department are really tackling the issue. The staff is very receptive to inclusivity and two pupils with Downs' syndrome have been welcomed and have succeeded in the school. The school also shows a strong commitment to providing opportunities for pupils excluded from other schools if they can meet their needs.
- 43 The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. There is a well-established programme that has recently been reviewed and which includes elements of sex and drugs education and citizenship. A copy of the school's sex education policy goes out to parents when pupils first come to the school. The drugs education policy is in draft form and has not been shared with other staff. Although the teaching time for personal, social and health education is 35 minutes, in effect only 20 - 25 minutes is used because of time being taken up with registration and administrative tasks with the result that activities are rushed or unfinished.
- 44 Careers education is well planned and organised with very effective support from the local careers adviser. The programme provides very good guidance for pupils on the next step. An exceptionally well-organised work experience in Year 10 is an integral part of the careers education programme. Local work places are used and pupils are encouraged to identify and secure their own placements but with full support. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported on the programme. The teacher responsible for careers has a very effective working relationship with the work experience co-ordinator. Regular meetings between the two ensure that curriculum provision is thorough and logical and pupils' needs are identified and met.
- 45 Links with the community that support pupils' learning are satisfactory. The personal, social and health education programme makes good use of local people and organisations. The Millennium Mission included contact with many local and national organisations and the school works to maintain good links with the parishes it serves. The design and technology curriculum includes some good industrial links. The school also has good links with its feeder schools and is looking to build better links with South East Derbyshire College.

- 46 As recommended in the previous inspection a review of the curriculum was undertaken and a new curriculum was introduced in 1997. However, some issues highlighted in the last report remain. At Key Stage 3 the school has not yet addressed the imbalance in time and the low amount of time allocated to art and music. There is still no formal structure for middle managers to meet together to discuss curriculum issues. However, there have been some improvements in curriculum organisation and improved timetabling arrangements have resulted in lessons being better distributed throughout the week. The comment in the last report on the less generous group sizes at Key Stage 3 has led to the creation of five smaller groups, from four larger ones, in English, mathematics and science in Year 9.
- 47 The provision for the personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. The arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good overall. It is embodied in the strong mission statement and the daily act of worship and permeates all areas of the curriculum.
- 48 The provision made for pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The school provides a very carefully planned daily act of worship, with opportunities for both staff and pupils to worship together, with a clear theme and focus. Staff in curriculum areas, in an implicit rather than an explicit way, follow through themes from the act of worship. In curriculum areas opportunities are taken to promote spiritual development, for example in drama an elderly person reflecting on life's experiences and feelings, in history how soldiers would have felt during the First World War and in art how colour can convey moods and feelings. There are many opportunities for reflection and a chapel is available to all.
- 49 Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Great emphasis is put on respect for the individual, equal opportunities and good relationships. Pupils know what is expected of them and are expected to respect the others' views, to work well together and to help each other. Staff present very positive role models for pupils in the working relationships they have with each other and the way they treat pupils. There is an implicit expectation that the whole community will support each other and respect each other's beliefs and talents. A good example of this occurred in a food technology lesson where a group of pupils was asked to consider the needs and beliefs of vegetarians.
- 50 Provision for social development is very good. Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise responsibility, to organise themselves and take part in residential courses, for example, at the Briars Residential Centre. In Years 9 and 10 the librarian system works well and in Year 11 there is a well-organised democratic process for appointing prefects. However, these opportunities are not so evident in Key Stage 3 and the school council does not always function. This is a missed opportunity for pupils who have a very well developed sense of corporate responsibility and would benefit from participation in such a body. Pupils are also encouraged to help charities and groups in the community who are in need.
- 51 Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities are created within the curriculum for pupils to appreciate a wide range of cultures and traditions especially in art lessons through the study of paintings from different cultures. A music module called "World Trip" focuses on Indian music and Reggae and festivals such as Diwali and Hanukkah are used as a context in English lessons. The school very carefully nurtures an understanding of how people live in other parts of the world, particularly third world countries, and of the deprivation and challenges they may face. Insufficient attention is given to ensuring that pupils are prepared for life in

a multi-cultural society through recognising and appreciating the positive contribution that other cultures make to the national and world community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 52 The care and concern that the school displays towards all pupils is outstanding and results in extremely high levels of mutual trust and respect. The school has successfully created an exceptional ethos that ensures care for everyone in the community. The overall quality of pastoral support is, however, only good and not very good because the school does not systematically collect and use information to guide all pupils' academic progress.
- 53 Parents are justifiably very positive about the way in which their children are looked after in school. The tutorial system is well organised. The pairing of tutor with the same group as they move through the school works well. Time and attention are given to matching the needs of the group with the particular skills of the teacher. There is a very strong whole team spirit with staff supporting one another exceptionally well. Support staff in all areas of the school life make very positive contributions to the welfare of the pupils. This includes administrative staff, premises staff and learning support assistants.
- 54 Parents, pupils and staff rightly speak positively about the role of the lay chaplain in the school. This relatively recent full time appointment is extremely valuable in supporting many of the pupils' personal and emotional needs. The human element of the first aid provision is very good. Well-trained staff are caring and concerned in their approach. The lack of a designated first aid room is a distinct disadvantage to the care and support of those who are ill and injured. Pupils are currently treated in the general office and have to either sit there or in the entrance hall for recovery or collection by parents.
- 55 The whole school community devotes considerable time and energy to ensuring that everyone is well, happy and making progress in school. Staff communicate regularly with one another about the needs of their pupils but this communication is usually informal.
- 56 Individual departments ensure the well being and safety of their staff and pupils. Senior staff and the governing body have not been carrying out their responsibilities to monitor the school's health and safety policy and practice rigorously. Inadequacies are now being addressed and suitable attention is being given to ensuring that regular inspections take place. The school has good arrangements for ensuring child protection.
- 57 Very good procedures are in place for promoting good behaviour. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations set by all staff. Commendations and certificates are generally well used to motivate the pupils to behave well. The school makes very good use of a suitable range of sanctions to support those few pupils who have difficulty conforming. The quality of support offered to these pupils is exceptionally good and results in very little exclusion from lessons or school.
- 58 Recent improvements in the attendance rates, which have never been unsatisfactory and are now good, are the result of improved monitoring and follow up by tutors and the very good support offered by the school's education welfare officer. Unauthorised absences appear surprisingly high in the school. This is due to the

school's policy of refusing to authorise any pupil holiday absence during school time. This policy succeeds in discouraging most parents from removing their children for holidays during term time, but some still do, producing the high figures.

- 59 All departments have suitable assessment policies in place but practice within and across different departments is too variable. The procedures for assessing pupil's progress are particularly good in the mathematics department. Here there are very good arrangements for recording pupils' attainment, assessing their progress and guiding their future work. National Curriculum assessments are correctly carried out in Year 9 in all the core subjects. There is, however, some overestimation by staff in several of the foundation subjects, notably modern foreign languages. The school has not yet developed a cohesive and consistent approach to the use of assessment, although departments are clearly aware of the value of tracking and monitoring progress and achievement.
- 60 The school collects information about pupil progress but does not use information technology to support the collection and use of this assessment information. The school lacks a formal regularly reviewed structure for the collation, analysis and dissemination of information. Guidance to individual pupils is therefore not focused on term-by-term, subject-by-subject data. It is more often based on how the pupils feel they are doing or on end of year reports. Pupils' work is regularly marked although comments do not always provide sufficient information about what pupils need to do next to develop and improve.
- 61 At termly intervals pupils are given grades on a 1-6 scale for effort, achievement, behaviour and attendance which give a picture of overall attitudes and progress. They provide some basis for discussion between the pupils and the tutor about personal development in particular. Staff are not consistent in their use of these grades and how they match with comments on the end of year reports. Insufficient use is made of focused target setting at either whole school, departmental or individual pupil level to bring about improvement, particularly for boys.
- 62 The school has very effective procedures for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs. The special educational needs team use their detailed knowledge of pupils to set very appropriate objectives and translate them into subject specific targets to use in their teaching so pupils get very good support. Annual reviews are completed on time and the special educational needs co-ordinator draws on assessment in all subjects and the team's own knowledge to provide very detailed information to these reviews. There are good relationships with support services. Pupils' achievements in reading and spelling are recorded and tracked. Very detailed and helpful information is provided to all staff on pupils on the special educational needs register. The special educational needs team work very hard to provide support to pupils whilst developing their independence.
- 63 Whilst the school assesses and monitors the achievements of pupils with special educational needs very carefully it does not identify nor provide separate detailed assessment and monitoring of pupils who are gifted or talented.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 64 Parents are very satisfied with the school and the way in which it provides a suitable and appropriate education for their children. They are rightly particularly appreciative of the time taken to meet individual pupils' needs. They value highly the ethos of the school and are very willing to be involved when given the opportunity. This willingness is obvious in the almost 100 per cent attendance at parents' interview evenings and the high level of support for any activities which the school organises for them. School productions are immensely popular with past, current and prospective parents. Enthusiasm is also evident in the activities and enthusiasm of the very active and successful Parent Teacher Association. The school appreciates this high level of support but does not always capitalise on this fully. As at the time of the previous inspection more work could be done to keep parents abreast of educational developments and to seek their views on aspects of the school's work.
- 65 The current prospectus does not fully comply with legal requirements but is in transitional state due to the appointment of the new headteacher. The annual governors' report is exceedingly brief and does not reflect the really positive nature of much that is happening in the school.
- 66 Information that is provided in the transition pack for new parents is of high quality except for the omission of information about the curriculum. Current pupils produce a booklet in English lessons about their perceptions of the school that is well used to give new pupils a consumer's view of the school. The school organises a number of evening meetings for groups of parents, such as parents of Year 10 pupils about to participate in work experience. This is good and enables parents to understand and share in their children's' experiences.
- 67 The school produces a monthly newsletter that gives an appropriate picture of the general activities of the school. There is, however, a lack of subject specific information. Parents are not given information about the future curriculum that their children will be experiencing.
- 68 Annual reports are circulated at the end of each year. These fulfil legal requirements. They give attainment levels of A to E and effort grades of 1-5 but many fail to give subject specific detail. They are often too generalised with insufficient reference to what pupils can and cannot do. The grades given do not always match the comments by staff. Targets for improvement are not always explicit and again are often too general.
- 69 The school has developed good homework diaries and these are often well used to communicate information to and from home. In Key Stage 3 pupils have a homework timetable. There is no timetable as such for Key Stage 4 but teachers and pupils generally manage this well. Year 11 parents are given good information about study skills, coursework and exam periods through a parents evening. Parents are suitably helped to support their pupils learning at home but they are so supportive that they could be working with the school on such major issues as boys' achievement.
- 70 The special educational needs team, particularly the special educational needs co-ordinator, work closely with parents and together create a real partnership to support the pupils. Communications with parents are good. The establishing of links with parents of pupils with special educational needs when the pupils are in Year 5 of the primary school enables a seamless transition to secondary school at the end of Year 6.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 71 The leadership of the previous headteacher has successfully created a character for the school that is valued by pupils, parents and staff and gives the school its uniqueness. However, this is not sufficiently focused on raising standards so that although results are good when compared with all schools and pupils make progress, the issue of boys' underachievement has not been systematically tackled. The leadership of the new headteacher is also good and he and his senior management team are acutely aware that the structures for managing the school are currently inadequate. For example, there is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum or teaching and learning. Development planning is inadequate and little guidance has been given to middle managers in order that they can plan to support school priorities. The roles of senior and middle managers and governors are underdeveloped. Whilst financial controls are good there is insufficient discussion and debate that ensures that finances are used to achieve priorities agreed by staff and governors.
- 72 The atmosphere of the school is characterised by care, respect and a strong sense of family. The recently revised mission statement embraces these values and underpins all that the school does. The school's commitment to and the development of good relationships is exemplary. This has resulted in very high standards of behaviour, attendance and personal development. There is a strong commitment to providing equality of opportunity, particularly for pupils experiencing difficulties in learning. However, there has not been enough work done to ensure that all pupils, within this very supportive and positive learning environment, attain or exceed expectations. There has also not been enough consideration given to developing a curriculum that might better meet the needs of some pupils.
- 73 Although the school knows that the ability profile on entry varies, it does not have sufficient data on pupils to plan the curriculum or to provide the basis for tracking pupils' progress. Consequently the school does not know whether it is doing as well as it can or whether it could do better. There is no systematic collection, analysis and use of data from tests at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 or GCSE examinations. Consequently, when the school initially set targets for GCSE results in 2000, they were far too challenging and unrealistic. A key issue from the previous inspection was that the school should develop an overall framework to monitor the school's effectiveness. This has not happened. There is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum or teaching and learning and few teachers have been observed teaching.
- 74 The previous inspection identified planning as a key issue. Although the school has a development plan that spans a three-year period it does not focus sufficiently on raising standards. There is no reference to boys' underachievement or to the necessary developments in information and communications technology, which the school is trying to tackle. As there is no development plan for information and communications technology and there is insufficient hardware and software to support both the curriculum and administration within the school, it is not possible for governors to know the demands that this area is likely to make on the school budget. The limited availability of computers in curriculum areas was an issue at the time of the previous inspection and although there has been an increase in hardware it is not easily accessible in curriculum areas to support learning.
- 75 Progress of the long-term plan has been reviewed but there is no evaluation evident. Deadlines have been missed and tasks not completed, including key issues from the previous inspection. Little guidance has been given to heads of department on their

development planning. Their plans are a list of tasks they need to do and are not sufficiently forward looking nor are they related to whole school priorities. Neither the school development plan nor departmental plans are costed in order to inform financial planning. This was also an issue at the time of the previous inspection.

- 76 The roles of senior and middle managers are underdeveloped. There is no forum where middle managers can discuss and influence whole school decisions, particularly the curriculum. There is no systematic link into the senior management team for middle managers to ensure good communications about the work of departments. Heads of department have autonomy within their areas but there is no systematic checking of whether school policies and procedures are being followed. For example, the school does collect data in a variety of forms but there is no system for ensuring that departments use this data. Although there has been some work done to clarify the roles and responsibilities of senior managers, their role and the roles and responsibilities of middle managers have not been made clear in relation to monitoring and evaluation and accountability. Despite some weaknesses in the management systems and structures within the school the new headteacher and senior and middle managers have the capacity and the commitment to improve the current situation and succeed.
- 77 The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths but is not so well informed about areas where improvements could and should be made. They fulfil their main statutory duties but their role is underdeveloped in terms of both shaping the direction of the school and in challenging practice. When there have been major strategic issues to debate and consider, they have been very involved and have managed these decisions well. For example, the decision to move to four forms of entry and to secure a loan to invest in the necessary new building. Necessary policies are in place but many are not detailed enough and the governors have not been involved in monitoring and reviewing them. The annual report to parents contains the necessary information but it is not presented in a way that helps parents to know how well the school is doing compared with the national picture. The temporary prospectus also lacks information in a number of areas, for example test and examination results with national comparisons.
- 78 The school has sufficient trained and experienced teachers to teach the National Curriculum and religious education. Support staff work hard but there is no technician support for information and communications technology and not enough technician support in science. There is a good induction programme both for newly qualified teachers and for experienced teachers new to the school. The school provides good opportunities for students in their initial teacher training programme. The relatively newly formed professional development committee works with staff to identify needs and to plan and access appropriate in-service training. Staff who attend in-service courses are required to provide feedback to their colleagues to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained. The work of the school in relation to staff development was recognised by the award of Investors in People to the school in March of this year. In the past the school has had a system of individual staff reviews but these were not completed last year. Whilst the school has a policy for performance management to be operational this year, there is currently no system in operation for the appraisal or review of teaching staff.
- 79 At the time of the last inspection the fabric of the school was described as poor, despite efforts of staff to improve the environment with effective displays of work. The quality in two curriculum areas, physical education and design and technology were mentioned particularly. Much work has taken place at the school since that time including new buildings and considerable refurbishment in the areas of science

and information and communications technology. Whilst the accommodation for information and communications technology has improved it remains too limited to provide for pupil entitlement across the curriculum. The decorative state, and in some areas the fabric of the buildings, remain in need of work. The gymnasium is too small for large groups of older pupils to play games and pupils have to make use of local leisure facilities to supplement school provision. This means that they have 45 minutes only of activity per week. Whilst most curriculum areas are grouped in terms of teaching rooms, food technology and mathematics still have rooms away from the main subject area. Despite the shortcomings that exist the environment is pleasant.

- 80 The resources for learning are generally satisfactory and in art they are good. There is insufficient access to computers in mathematics, science, music and design and technology and these are the main areas that should be contributing to the development of pupils' information and communications technology capability. There is also not enough access to computers for pupils with special educational needs or their teachers. The library plays an important role as a resource base for the school. A full-time librarian prepares boxes of books for research purposes at the request of individual departments, for example, research on animals in science. Pupils are able to access the library during lesson times for informational purposes. Pupils find their school library welcoming but are constrained by its limited availability at lunch times, just half an hour. Previously, the library has benefited greatly from the local education authority's library service for schools in maintaining an appropriate number of quality books. The uncertain future of the service, however, means that the school will need to consider carefully how to maintain and develop this resource internally. There are plans to update the computers in the library and to link them to the Internet but progress is very slow.
- 81 Whilst financial controls are good there is insufficient discussion and debate to ensure that finances are used to achieve priorities agreed by staff and governors. The governing body, whilst they help to set the budget and monitor its progress at regular intervals, have no formal system for evaluating the outcomes of their spending decisions. The day to day administration of the school finances and budget management is of a very high quality and provides a regular flow of financial information to governors and senior managers. Although the school achieves satisfactory value for money the principles of best value (namely comparison, challenge, consultation and competition) are not widely understood and used as a basis for planning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

Tackling the following key issues will ensure that all pupils attain the highest possible standards and benefit from the very positive and supportive atmosphere in the school.

(1) Improve the collection, analysis and use of assessment, test and examination data by:-

- establishing a whole school approach which provides cohesion and consistency in practice; (paragraph 59)
- establishing a system for monitoring pupils' progress across the key stages and across subjects; (paragraphs 60,63 and 73)
- using assessment information and data to set targets for the school, department and individual pupils. (paragraph 61)

(2) Improve the achievement of boys by:-

- identifying teaching strategies that involve and encourage boys in their learning; (paragraphs 32,42 and 74)
- monitoring pupils' progress and intervening where boys are thought to be underachieving. (paragraphs 60,61 and 71)

(3) Improve attainment in modern foreign languages by:-

- improving the quality and coherence of assessment; (paragraph 151)
- reviewing the languages provision in the school; (paragraphs 147 and 148)
- sharing the good practice in lesson planning and teaching that there is in the department; (paragraph 150)
- increasing pupils' independence and confidence in oral work. (Paragraphs 148 and 149)

(4) Improve the provision and use of information and communications technology to support both learning and administration by:-

- developing a long term strategic plan for information and communications technology; (paragraphs 60 and 74)
- reviewing the curriculum to ensure that information and communications technology is used to support learning in all subjects. (paragraphs 88,103,112,115,121,122, 131,133,144,146 and 159)

(5) Improve strategic and financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation at all levels by:-

- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle managers in these areas; (paragraph 76)
- developing an effective development and financial planning process that involves senior and middle managers and governors appropriately; (paragraph 74)
- developing a framework for monitoring and evaluation all aspects of the school's work, particularly the curriculum and teaching and learning. (paragraphs 73 and 76)

(6) Improve the curriculum in both key stages by:

- reviewing the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure that there is sufficient time for music, art, history, geography and modern foreign languages; (paragraphs 36,112,129,137 and 147)
- ensuring that the statutory requirements for information and communications technology in Key Stage 4 are met; (paragraphs 37 and 138)
- Ensuring that the curriculum in Key Stage 4 best meets the needs of all pupils. (paragraph 37)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	126
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4	15	49	30	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	599	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	42	n/a

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	81	n/a

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.89
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	55	64	119

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	36	36
	Girls	54	41	43
	Total	90	77	79
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (78)	65 (69)	66 (76)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (32)	34 (41)	24 (44)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	36	39	34
	Girls	55	45	41
	Total	91	84	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	78 ⁵	71	63 (74)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	38	36	19 (50)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	49	43	92

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	21	42	48
	Girls	27	39	41
	Total	48	81	89
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	52.2 (47.9)	88 (91.5)	97 (94.7)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.8)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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⁵ The school could not provide the 1998 Key Stage 3 teacher assessments for English and mathematics."

Average point score per pupil	School	38.3 (40.1)
	National	38 (36.8)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	592
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	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)	35
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	288

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27.3
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,523,936
Total expenditure	1,875,992
Expenditure per pupil	2,641
Balance brought forward from previous year	93,613
Balance carried forward to next year	52,752

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 40.7%

Number of questionnaires sent out	582
Number of questionnaires returned	237

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	45	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	54	2	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	54	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	37	57	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	48	14	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	38	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	29	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	40	46	12	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	59	35	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	42	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	41	18	3	12

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are generally very happy with the work of the school. They are particularly pleased with pupils' behaviour and the way the school helps pupils to grow up into sensible, mature and responsible people. They think that teaching is good and that the school has high expectations of pupils. They value the way the school is led and managed. Some parents would, however, like to be better informed about their children's progress and would like to see more activities outside lessons. The inspection team agrees that the school could do more to help parents to be more aware of their children's progress. The team found that there is a good range of extra-curricular activities, bearing in mind that this is a small school. Parents would also like to see a more appropriate amount of homework set. This latter point was raised at the parents' meeting and the general consensus was that homework is set but boys rush it and girls take too long over it.

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

ENGLISH

- 82 There has been a significant improvement in the percentage of pupils reaching Levels 5 and 6 in the end of Key Stage 3 English tests between 1997 and 1999, with continued improvement in 2000. In 1997 and 1998 the percentage of pupils was below national expectations, but rose above in 1999 to 76 per cent. Pupils performed even better in 2000, with 91 per cent achieving Level 5 and above. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 6+ was 36 per cent in 1999, rising to 41 per cent in 2000. In both cases the figures are significantly above national averages. Both boys and girls have shown improvement, although the boys continue to underachieve compared with other schools nationally. At Level 5+ in 1999, pupils in English achieved much better than in maths and at Level 6+ much better than in either maths or science.
- 83 The percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in GCSE English remained just above national averages between 1997 and 1999 and rose to 66 per cent in 2000, because levels of attainment by girls were well above national averages. The average points score for boys remained constant, however, which is clearly a cause for concern, seen especially in the results for English Literature. Here the percentage of pupils entered who achieved grades A*-C remained above national averages between 1997 and 1999 but in 2000 only a third of the boys who entered achieved grades A*-C. Indeed, 40 per cent of the boys failed to achieve a grade in English Literature in 1999, although the department improved this in 2000. Higher attaining pupils performed poorly in English in 1999, although better in 2000. In English Literature higher attaining pupils are in general performing according to national expectations.
- 84 This is very much a department in transition. In just four terms it has moved from being a group of individuals to working together as a team. Crucial to this has been the development of good schemes of work, which aim to provide an holistic experience of English from Year 7 through to the end of Year 11. Important ideas about the purpose of a text and matching it to the reader are taught from the very beginning. The department placing increased emphasis on how to write informatively. In a Year 7 class of lower attaining pupils, pupils were challenged to analyse passages of fictional, informative and instructional writing. Through skilful teaching allied to worksheets that structured pupils' learning carefully all pupils were enabled to grasp the key points and some talked with real understanding about how texts are organised. In their first lesson on media campaigns a Year 9 group quickly developed key understandings through highly focused, fast paced teaching that included leaflets, an anti-fur video clip, a discussion about the process for electing a head boy and girl, plus references to the highly topical petrol dispute.
- 85 The development of a resources centre for English, through much hard work, has helped the production of good quality resources. These effectively support teaching which is always satisfactory and often good. Staff know the pupils well and are good models of how to communicate in both speech and writing. Explanations are always informative and well structured and the materials produced by the department are unfailingly of a high standard. This is matched by good use of language on the part of pupils. When asked about their work pupils talk in well-shaped, coherent sentences and are able to provide crisp, thoughtful definitions of terms and concepts. The written work of even Year 7 pupils assumes that standard English is the normal mode of written communication such that pieces in the first person are unusually

clear and controlled.

- 86 Lessons begin punctually, with pupils entering classrooms keen and eager to learn. Teachers are purposeful and well organised so that lessons progress with very little time wasting. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, with teachers insisting on high standards of behaviour and ensuring that pupils listen attentively. Encouragement and praise are used judiciously in an atmosphere that is strongly supportive of pupils' needs. There is too little evidence, however, of imaginative speculation and curiosity in lessons. Questioning is too simplistic and infrequently used to encourage pupils to develop their own thoughts or to explore text for themselves, particularly in Key Stage 4. Pupils' responses that do not match the teacher's preconceptions are too often passed over, leaving avenues to alternative possibilities closed. There are exceptions to this. In Year 11 a group of higher attainers made rapid progress in exploring Wordsworth's 'On Westminster Bridge', comparing and contrasting it with Blake's 'London'. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and are able to discuss intelligently and at length the merits or otherwise of their current reading. When writing about themselves or when a task requires creative writing there is evidence of outstanding achievement by the few and great enjoyment by the many. When studying texts in class, however, pupils need to be taught to analyse and understand for themselves a writer's use of language and the complexity of literary texts.
- 87 Pupils' work is marked with care and attention and teachers have good expectations of the level of presentation. Some have used a record of achievement as a way of supporting pupils' development, but the decision to use a pupil self-evaluation form for each unit of work is good. Used consistently across the department, this will help to raise standards. Marking at present is very inconsistent and comments tend to be vague and generalised. They are rarely linked to assessment criteria for the particular piece of work, nor do they give clear indications as to what the pupil needs to do to improve. The department does not give enough careful consideration to the purposes of marking pupils' work and to the linkages between assessment, recording and reporting. There is insufficiently systematic use of assessment data to track pupils through the school, with clearly identified procedures to address under-achievement. Certainly, Year 11 pupils should not be left mystified as to the reasons for being moved between teaching groups half-way through their GCSE course. Reports to parents currently lack clear references to the work covered or precise indications of the gains made in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 88 Currently, approaches to reducing the unacceptably wide gap between boys' and girls' achievement in English are incoherent. Consideration has been given to the choice of texts used but there is no rigorous strategy in place. Development planning is rudimentary, although the collective nature of financial decision-making has been effective in the short-term. There is no link with whole school planning or systematic monitoring of classroom practice. The lack of information and communications technology development in English is an example of this. Teachers are keen to move forward but arrangements are informal and largely ineffectual, owing to the weakness of wider support.
- 89 Lower attaining and special needs pupils are very well supported in Key Stage 3. They are fully integrated within the English curriculum. They rise to the challenge through skilled and effective teaching on the part of highly committed staff. These pupils continue to be challenged through Key Stage 4. In a Year 10 group wholly composed of pupils with learning difficulties, some of them severe, the teacher took care to involve every pupil in examining a scene from 'Macbeth', with the result that several of these pupils could explain the superiority of Shakespeare's language

compared with a modernised version. In a Year 11 drama lesson a leading role was taken by a pupil with cerebral palsy in constructing a scene from childhood remembered by an elderly woman. Teaching was carefully structured and organised, attending to key drama concepts and yet providing plenty of space for the pupils to work independently.

- 90 Drama and media studies are offered as optional subjects in Key Stage 4. The teaching of both is good; for example, the introduction of the new Year 10 group to the media concept of 'representation' was highly skilled, using a series of steps framed in language of absolute clarity based on the assembly attended by the group that morning. Both subjects lack, however, the underpinning of systematic schemes of work or rigorous processes of assessment, recording and reporting. The relatively new head of English has a clear sense of direction and is strongly committed to the professional development of the department. It has come a long way in four terms and now needs the systems and processes that will consolidate and develop these gains.

MATHEMATICS

- 91 In the Key Stage 3 tests for 14-year-olds in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 5 was close to the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the above average Level 6 was also close to the national average. Whilst the girls outperformed the boys, the margin is too narrow to be significant. The overall performance in 1999 when compared to similar schools was well below the average for that group. The results for year 2000 show a considerable improvement that is well above the previous year's scores, particularly at the higher Level 6.
- 92 In the GCSE examination in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A* - C was above the national average. Whilst girls did better than boys, the margin was such that had three boys got an A* to C grade, the percentages would have been almost identical. However, in the year 2000 the overall percentage gaining grades A* - C score was better than the previous year. Girls this time outperformed boys by a much wider margin. In terms of the higher A*/A grades the girls also outperformed the boys by a bigger margin than might be expected.
- 93 The scrutiny of pupils work across the school shows all pupils to be working at least at an appropriate level, with the highest attainers achieving well above what might be expected. In Year 9 such pupils tackle algebra confidently and can manipulate complex formulas involving square roots. In Year 10 and 11 higher attaining pupils are working at National Curriculum levels of exceptional performance, using the sine rule to identify missing angles or sides and exploring complicated equations and graphs. Lower attaining pupils in both key stages are confident in their graph work and can read scales accurately. Pupils who have special educational needs are also working towards the targets set in their individual education plans and making at least satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 4 they can place numbers in sequence and understand the concept of rounding up numbers to the nearest 10, 100 or 1,000.
- 94 In lessons the overall standard of work is good, although it varies from very good to satisfactory. There is no evidence from lesson observations of any group - boys or girls, very able or less able - underachieving. There has been considerable thought given to what appears to be an emerging girl - boy difference in some of the results of some year groups in mathematics. The school believes these differences can be traced to the variation in the prior attainment of the pupils as they come from their primary schools. This situation is being very closely monitored in mathematics.

Taken overall the standard of work in this subject is good with some very high standards set by the most able pupils.

- 95 The quality of pupils' learning varies from very good to satisfactory and is good overall. Pupils' effort is good and the effort they put into the presentation of their work is often very good and never unsatisfactory. Productivity is good and levels of interest and concentration are again generally good. In one lesson some very able pupils in Year 8 were researching a small database. They worked extremely hard throughout the lesson, discussing and arguing the merits of different approaches, always focusing on their task. Their commitment, enthusiasm and interest for this work were of the highest order. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good. Their behaviour is never other than good, they handle materials sensibly, work well either on their own or in teams as the lesson demands and even when they find a task difficult they are very determined to succeed.
- 96 The quality of teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory and is good overall. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and often come up with contexts for mathematics, which of themselves are stimulating to the pupils. For example the Year 9 preparatory work on the Mission to Mars visit to the University of Leicester Space Centre is relatively demanding, but the context is one that motivates the pupils to succeed. The level of challenge in the work is just right and for the most able pupils it is at times very demanding, but not too demanding. Many lessons start with a numeracy activity, which the pupils enjoy. For all classes two lessons are of 70 minutes duration and this is sometimes too long when there is only one theme or piece of work during the lesson, particularly for the least able pupils or for those pupils who have special educational needs. Generally the time in lessons is well used. The valuable and strong emphasis on investigative work is not well supported by the use of microcomputers, say in the use of spreadsheets. The classroom relationship between the teachers and pupils is very good and this leads to an ease in the management of pupils that it is effective and rarely obtrusive.
- 97 The curriculum for mathematics meets National Curriculum requirements and the work being done on numeracy has made a sound start, although at times it is very narrowly defined as sums practice. Schemes of work are well written and give supporting ideas about the ways in which individual topics and themes might be taught. The assessment regime is very well organised and thought out and has a high level of pupil involvement. Pupils are much more aware of the level of the National Curriculum they are working on than is usually found.
- 98 The leadership and management of the department are very good. The Head of Department has a clear view of how mathematics should be taught and has communicated this well, both through her writing of departmental resources, team meetings and through the positive lead she gives by her own teaching. The school has no active system for the monitoring of classroom teaching, but the monitoring of pupils' assessment data is careful and thorough. All of these matters, of teaching, the curriculum, leadership and management are strong contributory factors in the overall good standards that pupils achieve. With the exception of the use of microcomputers, all matters raised in the previous report have been dealt with.

SCIENCE

- 99 Key Stage 3 test results in 1999 showed performance in science to be above the national average, both for the number of pupils reaching the expected Level 5 and

the higher Levels 6 and 7. When compared with similar schools results were below average. Performance in 1999 was lower because of lower attainment on entry than shown by other year groups. Comparisons indicate girls did not perform as well as boys, but both were above national averages. Results have been well above national averages over a period of four years and have improved from average levels since the last inspection, showing good achievement over time for the school. Performance of pupils in the current national tests is high when compared with the 1999 averages. High results at the expected Level 5 and the higher Levels 6 and 7 indicate very good improvement this year.

- 100 By the end of Key Stage 4 the 1999 GCSE results showed performance to be above the national average. The number of pupils achieving the grades A*-C in the double award course was well above the national average. In the single award course the number achieving these grades was below the national average. The percentage achieving grades A*-G in the double award and the single award were above the national average. The performance of girls was better than that of boys, with both above the national average. When compared with similar schools results were below average, mainly because of the lower than expected results in the single award and those attaining the highest grades of A* and A caused by staff absence. The results in 2000 show an improvement on those in 1999 and since the previous inspection.
- 101 Attainment is good at the end of both key stages. Pupils reach very good standards in practical investigation because departmental planning ensures regular and frequent opportunities for them to solve experimental problems. This helps them gain a good understanding of the concepts governing experimental findings. For example, Year 9 pupils in the higher sets have a good grasp of digestion as a result of a very well organised practical. They discover that small molecules of glucose will pass through the wall of the gut into bloodstream, but large starch molecules will not. Similarly, Year 11 pupils in the middle set reach good standards in finding out the effect of surface area on rates of chemical reactions. Those in higher sets reach good standards in using language to explain scientific ideas. Although those in lower sets find this more difficult, most reach average standards with good teaching and good support for those with special educational needs. The emphasis on scientific terminology helps pupils write successful experimental accounts, drawing effective scientific conclusions. Higher ability pupils reach good standards in the use of number, but those in lower sets find its application more difficult. However, good discussion with the whole class helps a lower set improve their ability to calculate pressure with the effect of changing force or area. Pupils do not reach high enough standards in the use of information and communications technology to record and analyse information. This affects the overall attainment of pupils of all abilities because they do not use finished data sufficiently to analyse and evaluate different experimental outcomes.
- 102 Achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons, sustaining good progress over time. Year 7 pupils make a very good start, showing a good basic understanding of electricity. They make very good gains in the skills of measuring current, arguing well the case for whether the position of the instrument in the circuit will make a difference. Lower attaining pupils make good progress, particularly those with special educational needs. A boy who needs to improve his manipulative skills is well supported in class by a learning assistant and makes progress equivalent to his peers. Pupils in Year 8 make satisfactory progress in lessons on reproduction. Although they have undertaken good research on patterns of animal reproduction, they have not had sufficient guidance in presenting information to the whole class. As a result, others become bored as they read their accounts. Similarly, another class is rather tentative

in discussing a video, but they improve with supportive questions from the teacher. Higher attaining pupils make very good gains in understanding when teachers ask questions with sufficient challenge. For example, those in Year 10 talk about factors that might change the rate of osmosis, using their knowledge to design their own investigation. Occasionally, the highest attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged in writing argumentative conclusions. This was evident in written work of pupils in the highest sets, particularly in Key Stage 4.

- 103 Teaching is good overall. No lessons were unsatisfactory, which is a tribute to a very committed team. The teaching of basic skills in literacy is well developed and improving further as a result of good work between science staff and the literacy co-ordinator. Teachers pay good attention to words associated with scientific ideas. Written support materials are adapted for particular groups and usually match pupils' needs well, particularly those with lower reading skills and those with special needs. In one lesson pupils are reminded to be more scientific as they speak and this promotes a better understanding, evident in their writing. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Although pupils are given good support during calculations and graphs, teachers have not analysed how to systematically improve pupils' skills during lessons so there is no consistent practice. Similarly skills in Information and communications technology are not planned for within schemes so opportunities are too few and depend on the enthusiasm of individual teachers.
- 104 A further strength of the teaching is that teachers expect pupils to gain good subject knowledge. They convey information through good presentation and demonstration, encouraging pupils to explore scientific ideas for themselves. Teachers praise, enthusiasm and hard work generally encourage full participation in discussion, ensuring girls and boys have equal opportunities for answering questions and giving opinions. Relationships are good. However, teachers do not always make sure that every pupil is actively involved in discussion, so that some remain too quiet. This makes it difficult to assess their learning.
- 105 Planning is good. Lesson objectives are clear and teachers explain them carefully to pupils. Teachers organise lessons well. Very good preparation of resources enables teachers to make good use of time, supported by competent and very hard working technicians. Lessons usually have a good pace with plenty of variety. Support teachers and learning assistants support pupils with special educational needs well. However, teachers do not always take sufficient care to monitor the progress of pupils whilst they are working and this is a weakness. A further distinction between learning in the satisfactory and the very best lessons is the quality of review in the satisfactory lessons. The end of the lessons are often too rushed and pupils do not have the opportunity to consolidate the main learning points. Teachers set homework regularly, expecting pupils to record this in their diaries.
- 106 Assessment is an area for further development. Work is well marked and pupils discuss their efforts. They have written tests after each topic. They know their levels of attainment at the end of each key stage and understand the criteria for assessing practical investigations in Key Stage 4. However, because they do not have precise information about National Curriculum levels within each attainment target, it is difficult for them to know how to improve during each term and from year to year. There is currently no system for assessing their progress in the use of information and communications technology.
- 107 Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behave very well in lessons. They respond very well to lively teaching and are serious minded about their work. They manage practical resources well and most participate in discussion, although some

are not engaged, unless prompted. Pupils usually support each other well, talking about ideas and co-operating well in teams. They enjoy very good relationships with teachers, steadily increasing in maturity. All pupils respond very well to fulfilling safety procedures.

- 108 The department is well organised. Continuity has improved through each key stage with good schemes of work. These are improving further as teachers take better account of pupils' learning in Key Stage 2. Schemes do not currently specify how to develop techniques for improving numeracy further or the use of information and communications technology. The quality of monitoring is unsatisfactory because systems are not properly developed in the school as a whole. Assessment in lessons needs to be more rigorous, giving pupils confidence in setting targets for improvement.

ART

- 109 In 1999 results at the end of Key Stage 3 indicate pupils attaining standards in line with the national average. Results in 2000 show an improvement on 1999. In 1999 the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A*-C was slightly above the national average. In 2000 results indicate A*-C grades are below those achieved in 1999. All pupils entered got at least a G grade in both years. There is still evidence of boys' underachievement with no strategies in place to improve the situation. Overall standards have improved since the last inspection. The continuing development of the schemes of work for both key stages contributes greatly to this sustained improvement, especially for any pupils who enter the school with a low skills and knowledge base in the subject.
- 110 During their Key Stage 3 course pupils make good progress. They develop a growing understanding of art and its many elements. This includes specialist language and terminology and using a range of skills and techniques in a variety of media and materials including paint, textiles and modelling relating to line, shape, space and texture. Pupils are beginning to demonstrate a balance between imaginative and technical skills. They draw with some accuracy and quality of line and with increasing confidence and produce quality paintings and drawings. The cultural and historical element of the course is developing well. Pupils have knowledge and use the works of a range of artists from different cultures and time including European, Mexican and African artists as a starting point or stimulus in much of their work. For example, in Years 7 and 8 they use the works of Picasso and Hundertwasser in their work in portraiture. This is adding a strong spiritual and cultural element to pupils understanding and knowledge. At Key Stage 4 evidence in folders and lesson observations shows that pupils build upon their Key Stage 3 course and develop ideas, themes in their paintings and many have an understanding of how the use of colour can be used to reflect moods and feelings. At Key Stage 4 pupils make good progress extending their competence and visual awareness.
- 111 The quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4 is good and some is very good. Teaching is a strength of the department, has improved since the last inspection and is having a very positive effect on the quality of learning. Lesson introductions are lively, interesting and well timed, with good use made of visual material and well-timed demonstrations of techniques, for example, the production of tonal ranges by the addition of other colours and white in Year 8 lessons on portraiture. Good use is made of discussion and directed questioning ensuring understanding of tasks and terminology. The good subject knowledge and detailed planning of lessons cater for the wide range of abilities. There is a good balance between whole group and

individual help and tasks are challenging and varied. Teachers are confident, friendly and supportive. Time is well used and pupils are encouraged and praised with the needs of the individual given a high priority. All pupils are given the opportunity to develop within the framework provided by the teacher. Good use is made of homework to practice skills, develop ideas and research into various artists. Pupils respond very well to the enthusiasm and sensitivity in the teaching, they work with increasing confidence with good levels of concentration and increasing ability to think for themselves. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils are motivated, work well together, and respect each other and each other's views. They take a pride in their work and its presentation. Pupils respond very well to the art room environment, which encourages a sense of purpose and belonging.

- 112 The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets statutory requirements and provides a broad range of experiences. The very limited time allocation especially in Year 7 does not provide pupils with the opportunity to gain the depth of knowledge and understanding to move standards further forward. Assessment and recording systems are in place; they are manageable and informative in relation to the end of project assessment, which is well recorded. However, ongoing assessment at Key Stage 3 is not well used, leaving pupils unaware of criteria and what they need to do to improve. There is insufficient use of information and communications technology.
- 113 The art department is well managed on a daily basis, but long term strategic planning is weak. There are no formal meetings for staff to share views on new curriculum developments or the subjects' direction in relation to the whole curriculum. Staff are enthusiastic and supported by the head of department on a day to day basis. The accommodation is well maintained and provides a stimulating atmosphere for art work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 114 National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 1999 were reported as slightly below national expectations overall. However, the results for the year 2000 show a significant increase in the percentage of pupils achieving the national average of Level 5 or above. The scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection supports this year's results and indicates that the pupils in Year 9 are on target to achieve the national average by the end of the key stage. Girls, however, attain much higher standards than boys. Almost twice as many girls as boys achieve the national standard. Pupils achieve higher standards in making than they do in designing. The quality of their finished products is generally higher than that of pupils of the same age nationally. The lack of easy and regular access to computers in order to carry out research and to present their findings is restricting the pupils' ability to obtain the highest marks for their planning. Pupils show a pride in the quality of finish in their practical work in all the aspects of the subject. They are able to design and make artefacts that meet the needs of specific users, having investigated their needs and drawn up clear specifications for their products. As part of their work they gain an insight into industrial practices and begin to realise the importance of quality control. They become competent at choosing materials and techniques, which are well suited for the purpose. They also learn to work together in pairs and teams, sharing and making the best use of their combined skills and knowledge.
- 115 GCSE results in 1999 were well above the national average overall. Results in the different design and technology subjects vary, but standards achieved in textiles are consistently high compared with the national average. The school has maintained this level of attainment over the last three years. Provisional results for the year 2000

are better than those in 1999 in all aspects of design and technology. Pupils are able to achieve the highest levels, that is A and A*, but the number of pupils who do so is generally below the national average and the school is hoping to improve this. As is the case at Key Stage 3 girls achieve much better results than boys and the school knows that raising the level of boys' attainment is a key issue for the department to tackle. At Key Stage 4 pupils become much more competent at carrying out their own research, but the quality of their work suffers due to the lack of easy access to computers. Similarly, opportunities to carry out computer aided design and manufacture are very restricted due to the schools' lack of resources and consequently the pupils' skills are underdeveloped in this compulsory aspect of the subject. Pupils' practical skills are well developed and examples of GCSE coursework in all the contributory subjects show real pride in the quality of finish and attention to detail. The pop-up book made for a toddler by a pupil on the graphic products course is of such a good standard that teachers use it to inspire younger pupils to show similar creativity, skill and perseverance in their work. Presentation of written work is average and would be improved with better use of information and communications technology, which is not possible at present due to the lack of computers in the design and technology rooms.

- 116 Achievement at both key stages is satisfactory, although girls make more progress than boys. Pupils become increasingly independent in their ability to design and make for particular situations. Their ability to produce careful drawings improves and the pupils gain a greater range of techniques as they move through the school. Pupils develop the ability to choose appropriate materials and techniques and they broaden and refine the range of skills they possess. The curriculum has been planned to ensure that pupils are continually building upon and using prior skills and knowledge. However, there are places where pupils are taught new skills which do not contribute in any way to what they are asked to do next. The scheme of work needs to be reviewed to ensure time is not wasted teaching skills which pupils do not need. Overall, the curriculum teaches pupils a range of skills to a good standard and gives them the opportunity to put them into practice in realistic situations.
- 117 Pupils' attitudes towards their work are generally good. They behave well in lessons, showing interest and enthusiasm, particularly for practical activities. Pupils respond well to questioning, showing they have listened well and are willing to justify their decisions and apply new knowledge in unfamiliar situations. Pupils take pride in their practical work and are generally willing to persevere to ensure they produce good quality artefacts that they are proud of and want to take home and use. Pupils are co-operative with each other. They are willing to share materials and equipment and are happy to help each other. They show due concern for their own and others' safety.
- 118 The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and it was good in half of the lessons observed during the inspection. All staff in the department have a secure understanding of the subject and teach basic skills well. They have also thought about the contribution this subject can make to the development of pupils' literacy skills and each lesson makes a positive contribution. Care has been taken to ensure displays of key vocabulary are readily accessible in each room and teachers clearly expect pupils to use them to improve the quality of their work. Weighing ingredients, marking out, carrying out research and producing tally charts, graphs and pie charts all make a positive and planned contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Teachers are well organised and plan thoroughly for their lessons. They specify learning objectives, but these still require further development as they often state what will be taught rather than what pupils should achieve. Teachers provide clear explanations and demonstrate new skills and techniques competently. They

use questioning well to check pupils have understood and to get them to think carefully and apply their knowledge and skills in real situations.

- 119 When planning lessons teachers take into account the individual targets set for pupils with special educational needs and ensure that they set work which will be achievable and enable pupils to achieve their targets. Similarly, teachers are now beginning to set extension activities for the higher attaining pupils in order to help them achieve higher levels. Teachers have already identified where changes will have to be made in order to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000 but have not yet adapted the current schemes of work in order to implement them.
- 120 Sometimes teachers spend too long explaining and reinforcing work. This restricts the amount of work pupils can do in the time available and causes pupils to become restless. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and pupils value the extra time teachers put into extra-curricular opportunities in order to help pupils improve the quality of work. There is a sensible assessment strategy, which is fully understood by the pupils. Those taking examinations receive useful feedback that tells them how they can improve their work in order to increase their marks and overall grade. Teachers accurately assess pupils work generally, although they are sometimes over generous when achieving Levels 6 and 7 at the end of Key Stage 3.
- 121 Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. The department is unable to fully meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000 due to the lack of information and communications technology resources and has not been able to meet statutory requirements in the past. There are not enough books and pupils generally have to share textbooks. Much of the equipment is very old, but it has been well cared for and is in good condition even though it is dated. The school has been able to borrow essential resources, such as an overlocking machine for textiles work and two computers. This allows older pupils to do some basic computer assisted design and manufacturing but only on a temporary basis. This makes long term planning difficult as teachers are unsure how long they will be allowed to keep the equipment. Teachers use the limited finances available to buy resources sensibly. They suffer as a result of not been allowed to carry forward unspent money into the next financial year and this prevents them being able to replace more expensive items such as microwave ovens. There is a health and safety issue in the department. It is vital that the legally required checks are carried out on all the electrical equipment in the department, especially as much of it is so old. The rooms themselves are drab and full of old cupboards that do not present a positive image of the subjects, despite the teachers' efforts to improve the learning environment through displays of pupils' work. Any monitoring within the department is informal and the head of department has no time to fulfil this responsibility. There are few opportunities for the department's views to be represented at a whole school level.
- 122 The department has maintained the standards of recorded in the previous inspection report. All the positive comments about pupils' attitudes and the quality of teaching still apply. However, the school has not done enough to improve the use of information and communications technology in the subject and the situation is now even more worrying as there is a greater demand for pupils to use these facilities in Curriculum 2000.

GEOGRAPHY

- 123 This is a good department that continues to improve. High quality teaching ensures that pupils achieve high standards. Unmoderated teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 showed attainment to be slightly above that found nationally.

Whilst boys' attainment was at the national average, girls' attainment was noticeably better. Currently, attainment is similar but with less evidence of a gender difference. Pupils show a working geographical vocabulary and a sound range of locational knowledge. In their work on, for example, rainfall patterns in Britain they show a sound knowledge and understanding of geographical patterns and processes. Because the teacher provides good case study materials the pupils understand how people live in particular places and how people are affected by major environmental processes. They are developing their knowledge and understanding of important environmental issues such as global warming and the possible consequential sea level changes in the United Kingdom. Their geographical skills are well developed. Using questionnaire surveys they have produced effective individual investigations around such questions as "How green is my family?" Overall, much of their work is descriptive and there is less evidence in written work of pupils offering reasons, explanations or causes for a feature or process. Their independent enquiries lack the analytical depth to achieve the higher levels of the national curriculum.

- 124 All pupils in Key Stage 3, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding. This is related to the very positive attitudes and approaches to work that the pupils have developed. There was an atmosphere of learning in all the lessons seen and pupils showed good levels of concentration. Pupils respond and learn in each lesson because the work is interesting, sometimes requires group collaboration and discussion and because the teachers offer structured help to individuals in an environment of good relationships. Boys' response is good in all years particularly where the work focuses on physical geographical themes.
- 125 Such attainment, progress and response is associated with the high quality of teaching. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is either good or very good. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn. They plan, manage and structure lessons well, making good use of time and resources. In a Year 8 lesson groups of pupils were given a range of general and technical information about a catastrophic event and required to work together, both to describe the event and its impact by completing a data file. Pupils learned much, as was shown by their understanding of both technical terms, such as magnitude, intensity and Richter scale, and in their appreciation of other people's experiences. Some aspects of the teaching are less well developed. Whilst most of the lessons engage pupils there is a need to challenge them further by asking them to reason and to explain. Some pupils need more support to develop their language skills so that they can write precise descriptions and summaries. There is a need for a pattern of enquiry work across the key stage that progressively builds in its demands for independent structured work.
- 126 By Year 11 pupils' attainment in geography is better than that found nationally. This judgement is supported by GCSE results that have been consistently high and among the best results in the school. In 1999 81 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C and the year 2000 figures are similar at 79 per cent, with the highest grades, A* and A, strongly represented. A major strength is the good knowledge and understanding of physical and human processes, underpinned by a good use of technical terminology. In one lesson, for example, the pupils showed a clear understanding of hydrographs and associated terms such as 'peak discharge' and 'lag time'. Another strength is the high standard of hypothesis testing enquiry work based on data collected in the field. Here pupils investigate the differential perception and use of Derby streets by shoppers and present their information often using computers. This work shows much thought and analysis and a good level of skill development. These are important strengths in attainment but there are some

current weaknesses. At this stage of the course a few pupils show insecurity in their knowledge as, for example, understanding the idea of “transpiration”. Not all pupils are at ease describing processes precisely and putting explanations into words, nor have they yet reached appropriate levels of reasoning.

- 127 All pupils in Key Stage 4, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. As in Key Stage 3 they concentrate well and show very positive approaches to learning. These are encouraged by well planned field work opportunities, associated with their independent structured enquiry work, and an investigative cross unit task on the impact of North Sea oil in the Shetlands.
- 128 All the teaching in Key Stage 4 is good in that it ensures good learning, positive responses and high levels of attainment. Teachers offer appropriate levels of challenge, as in the lesson where pupils were required to relate rainfall to runoff and to appreciate the causes of flooding. Teachers use rich visual material to give a detailed case study in which pupils can anchor more abstract ideas. Teachers are beginning to exploit the use of computers for collecting and thinking about geographical information, as in a Year 11 lesson where pupils accessed data about standards of living and quality of life. The pupils extracted statistical indicators and other information from a data bank and then word processed a report, comparing and contrasting a more economically developed country with a selected less economically developed country. Teachers’ planning is exemplary.
- 129 The department offers a balanced course to all pupils that satisfies statutory requirements but the single lesson limits the breadth and depth of the curriculum offered. There are few opportunities for fieldwork in Key Stage 3 and increased use should be made of the new technology. In the lower Key Stage 3 there are clear assessment procedures in place and National Curriculum levels are given to parents at the end of Year 9. This assessment system lacks explicit use of national criteria from Year 7 onwards and could involve pupils more in individual subject specific target setting for improvement. The new teacher in charge is managing the subject area well. She is ensuring that the scheme of work is documented, that there are appropriate priorities for development and she has begun making valuable changes in many areas, for example, in enquiry work and the use of computers. Currently there is no monitoring of teaching through classroom observation.
- 130 Since the previous inspection standards at GCSE have risen to be above the national average. Teaching continues to be good. The time allocated to the subject is still “slender”.

HISTORY

- 131 This is a good department which has developed well over the past few years. It provides a very high quality of teaching and pupils achieve high standards. Unmoderated teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 showed attainment of pupils to be below that found nationally. Attainment of the current Year 9 cohort is higher and is slightly above that found nationally. Pupils show a developing sense of chronology through good use of time lines and historical conventions from Year 7 onwards. They show a sound knowledge and understanding of the situations studied and an understanding of such historical concepts as cause and consequence when looking at change in Britain 1750-1850. They investigate and compare sources well and appreciate their usefulness to an historian. They understand that people and historical events have been interpreted

differently as they respond to questions like ‘Robespierre – hero or villain?’ Many write fluently as they identify the effects of the American Revolution and the Civil War on slavery. Whilst most can research information from books in the classroom and library and conduct enquiries with a measure of independence, their work is mainly descriptive, with only some analysis. There is less evidence of critical thinking or evaluation of sources of information. In previous years there has been a marked difference in the attainment of boys and girls but currently the attainment of boys is improving. This is the direct result of classroom strategies, for example, changing seating arrangements, broadening assessment methods, stressing the skill aspects, introducing information and communications technology and giving prominence to key words.

- 132 All pupils in Key Stage 3, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their historical knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils have developed very positive attitudes and approaches to work. They show much interest in and enthusiasm for the work and are willing to offer thoughtful oral comments. They concentrate on their work because teachers provide interesting challenges. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and offer different levels of support through work matched to the needs of individual pupils. All Year 9 pupils studying the First World War, for example, learnt how to write an essay, with the lower prior attaining pupils supported by an explanatory writing frame.
- 133 Such attainment, progress and response in Years 7 to 9 is associated with a high quality of teaching which is always good and often very good and excellent. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn. They plan, manage and structure lessons well, making good use of time and resources. They make sure that, whilst all pupils cover the same work, individuals work at different tasks. The tasks offer good challenges to thinking. In a Year 8 lesson on the fall of the Bastille pupils read a range of relevant sources. They had to critically evaluate each one as possible supporting evidence for six different reasons explaining the event. They responded to the reading and tasks with interest and some mature thinking emerged. A Year 9 lesson was equally demanding. After discussing some photographs of the first World War pupils were required to give concentrated attention to a structured teacher narrative and make notes of key points as they prepared to write an essay. In similar ways all the lessons seen during the inspection set out to both challenge and support pupils. There is, however, insufficient use of information and communications technology in the subject and not enough site visits. Pupils would benefit from a focused, question testing approach in their Year 9 investigations in order to encourage higher order thinking skills.
- 134 By Year 11 pupils are achieving standards above those seen normally at this age. In 1999 GCSE results show that 33 per cent of pupils gained A*-C but these percentages were from a very small entry of seven. In the much larger entry for 2000 the percentage of pupils gaining grade A*-C rose to 69 per cent. Girls still gain a much larger percentage of A*-C grades than boys. Current Year 11 attainment shows many strengths. Pupils have a good range of knowledge and understanding. They have a good sense of historical concepts, as in their work on the Wall Street Crash and the effect of the Depression on American cities and the countryside. Their analysis of sources is well developed. They analyse historians’ judgements well, judgements such as AJP Taylor’s of the impact of the Abyssinian crisis on the League of Nations. Pupils write well in response to demanding essay titles. Their extended investigations for coursework outlining the reasons for Hitler’s rise to power, for example, are well written and thoughtful. There are no major weaknesses in attainment at this level but A*/A grades are under-represented in the GCSE

results.

- 135 All pupils in the upper school, including those with special educational needs are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. As in Key Stage 3 they concentrate well and show positive attitudes to learning, encouraged by visits to the First World War battlefield sites in France and attendance at GCSE history conferences. The well-structured course work tasks also help.
- 136 All the teaching in Key Stage 4 ensures much learning, positive responses and high levels of attainment. Teaching in the Year 10 and 11 lessons observed was judged to be excellent. The teacher has a high level of subject knowledge and understanding. Language was used precisely and accurately, which encouraged sensitivity and a thoughtful response. Questioning offered a good level of challenge, requiring pupils of all abilities to respond fully and critically. Planning was done well to meet individual needs and in the classroom pupil's ideas were welcome. Lessons move at pace and are well managed. As part of a Year 11 lesson on the American depression boys as a group and girls as a group each collected, exchanged and discussed information on the two 1932 presidential candidates. With this and other knowledge they had to assign six presidential campaign statements to either Roosevelt or Hoover and give their reasons. The whole lesson was very well managed by a knowledgeable teacher keen to elicit responses from both gender groups and from each individual, all of whom were fully involved. The quality of the resources and task ensured pupils developed their historical skills. Questioning ensured that the pupils gained much knowledge and understanding of the differences between political leaders, sustained interest over the full 70 minute lesson and worked hard at a high intellectual level.
- 137 The department offers a balanced curriculum to all pupils and satisfies statutory requirements. But in Key Stage 3 the subject is allocated only one lesson each week which limits the breadth and depth of the history experience. The subject area has clear assessment procedures based on National Curriculum level criteria but has yet to involve pupils fully in subject specific target setting for improvement. Subject documentation is concise and pertinent and detailed schemes of work are well organised around questions to investigate. There are appropriate priorities for development, including increased use of the new technology. Currently there is no monitoring of teaching through classroom observation. Since the previous inspection standards have improved and the quality of teaching is now of a consistently high quality. The time allocated to the subject is still "slender".

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 138 Overall standards are satisfactory in Key Stage 3. Three-quarters of pupils achieve Level 5 or above by the end of Year 9. Marginally more girls than boys achieve above Level 5 but the difference is not significant. There are shortcomings in some aspects of the provision, e.g. controlling, measuring and modelling. The programmes of study of the National Curriculum are covered but the depth and range of the coverage could be stronger. The decisions taken since the previous inspection has resulted in no separate provision for information and communications technology in Key Stage 4. This decision means that National Curriculum requirements are not met in this key stage.
- 139 Pupils in Key Stage 3 attain a satisfactory standard, demonstrating competence in the aspect of exchanging and sharing information. They display an ability to reflect on their own work and that of others, making mature and constructive comments.

For example, Year 9 pupils involved in designing book covers considered examples of 'best sellers' to determine the impact of various features. Following this they prepared a design for a book of their choice. Higher attainers show a good understanding of potential audience, recognising the range of presentational techniques available to them. Skills are less well developed in terms of developing and testing out ideas. The limitations on equipment across the curriculum restrict opportunities to analyse and test data using spreadsheets models, for example, in science to ask the 'what if?' questions. Teacher assessments accurately indicate that pupils at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with standards achieved nationally.

- 140 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and in some aspects, for example, visual imagery, they make good progress. The department has a good knowledge of pupils' needs, providing for them effectively and producing subject specific targets for the individual pupils. They are beginning to address the literacy needs of pupils with the support of the school's literacy co-ordinator, for example, word lists are used in Years 7, 8 and 9. This enables pupils to become familiar with technical terms and use them in appropriate circumstances. Strategies to support numeracy developments are not yet in place.
- 141 Teaching in the department is always satisfactory and often good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is sufficiently secure to enable appropriate learning to take place. They provide an environment conducive to productive working. The most effective teaching observed gave pupils clear instructions about what was expected of them. Pupils were therefore clear about the task set. For example, Year 9 pupils designing an identity card, which involved importing their own digital image, were able to work on their own for most of the lesson. Having a clear understanding of the teacher's expectation they were able to explore the design functions available to them. Efficient organisation ensured good pace and learning. Where lessons were less effective teachers tended to use too much of the lesson providing information without allowing pupils to demonstrate their own understanding of the topic being covered. Where extended introductions to lessons were observed pupils tended to be less attentive, demonstrating an eagerness to move to the practical aspect of the lesson. The quality and use of questioning to reinforce learning varied: where questioning was effective it was open and established, for the teacher, the quality of learning achieved.
- 142 All pupils make at least satisfactory progress whilst some make good progress, including those with special educational needs. Activities provided help pupils to build on previously gained knowledge, often through the use of home-based equipment, and improve their skills as discerning and critical users of the technology. Where opportunities are provided for them to research and handle information they apply their understanding well. Pupils assess and record their own progress using record books. Both pupil and teacher contribute to the record, but whilst good examples of use were noted there is an inconsistency of use and practice which reduces the effectiveness of the system considerably. Marking often does not give advice on what actions are needed to achieve at a higher level.
- 143 Pupils show very positive attitudes to school and the work required of them in information and communications technology. Behaviour and application to work rarely fall below a commendable level. It is only when the challenge of the work is inadequate that pupils' behaviour falls below the normally high standard. For example, one Year 9 pupil chose to explore alternative software having quickly produced an adequate design for an identification card. Pupils displayed a high degree of respect for people and equipment.

- 144 The curriculum provision within the taught information communications technology course for Key Stage 3 is adequate and appropriate. This separate course is sometimes used to support subjects. The provision for information and communications technology across the curriculum varies but is generally weak. The previous report highlighted a shortage of resources and although the quality of resources has improved, the access and overall quantity remains inadequate. The current accommodation and equipment enable subject areas to book the use of the smaller computer facility but this requires groups of more than 20 to 'double-up' on computers. Although facilities are limited there is an obvious desire on the part of most subject areas to improve their use of computers and to begin to meet the requirements of curriculum 2000. Some subjects such as geography, history and mathematics use the room they can book for pupils to research via the Internet or subject specific software. Key Stage 4 pupils are disadvantaged because only those taking business studies have regular access to computer facilities. Therefore, by the age of 16 less than half the pupils have had regular opportunities to build on their Key Stage 3 experiences and to further their knowledge and understanding. There is no accreditation available at the end of Year 11.
- 145 Management of the subject within the department is sound, although monitoring of teaching and staff development needs to develop along with the overall role of the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator, despite having no technician, has made a great effort to achieve a quality facility. As the school attempts to improve its ratio of computers to pupils from 12:1 towards the national average of 8:1 it will be essential to have technical support on site, thereby ensuring that the teaching expertise available can be used efficiently.
- 146 Overall the quality of resources and accommodation is adequate to service the current needs of the department. The main computer room does not have the benefit of an accessible white board or large computer screen display. This prevents effective demonstration by teachers or pupils. The new, second computer room suffers the same disadvantage. The school has clearly improved the quality of the equipment in use since the last inspection but unfortunately the overall curriculum provision has worsened. Quality of teaching and learning has improved which is reflected in the improvement of standards at Key Stage 3. However, the challenge that remains is to ensure that pupils in Key Stage 4 receive their entitlement either through an effectively co-ordinated cross-curricular approach or discrete provision

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 147 At the end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments indicate standards in French and German have moved from slightly below the national average in 1999 to a long way above expectations in 2000. There is no evidence for this huge improvement in pupils' work and it is not supported by observations during the inspection. Standards are judged to be below expectations in Key Stage 3, particularly for speaking. In an attempt to diversify foreign language learning the school has offered all Year 7 pupils French and German for half a year each, with a choice thereafter of one or both languages. As the total time allocation for this ambitious programme is only 140 minutes a week, insufficient progress is made by the end of Key Stage 3 in both languages. Moreover there is no accelerated plan for those taking two languages in Years 8 and 9. An additional handicap to learning is the absence of any assessment scheme to guide progress for both pupils and teachers.
- 148 The slow start made in Key Stage 3 carries over into Key Stage 4. In 1999 36 per cent of candidates for French achieved GCSE grades A - C compared with the

national average of 46 percent. In German the figure was 43 per cent compared to the national average of 52 per cent. The 2000 figures rose to 45 per cent for both languages, a considerable improvement for French on the previous year but still below expectations and well below the average for other subjects in the school. There were no A* grades in 2000 and only a small number of A and B grades. Some good quality writing can be seen in exercise books and listening skills are also close to expectations. However, little spoken fluency is achieved in lessons and pupils are not encouraged to record themselves on cassettes. In the early part of lessons pupils are often able to demonstrate listening skills up to National Curriculum Level 4 but then struggle later in the lesson to reach even Level 2 for speaking.

- 149 Pupil attitudes to their learning are invariably positive but many have little confidence when speaking. They seem to believe they cannot say much unless they are reading from a text or the board. Curiously, lower ability groups are more inclined to use the foreign language than supposedly higher ability groups. Good sustained oral work was seen during the inspection in lower ability German sets in Years 8 and 9 and in a lower ability Year 11 French group. Pupils responded well to teacher prompting, sometimes initiated dialogues and attained some fluency without relying on the printed word. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Boys and girls work at a similar level but the setting at the end of Year 7 often results in top sets having only a few boys and this has an effect right through to GCSE.
- 150 All teachers have appropriate linguistic knowledge and experience. They manage lessons well and make good use of resources except for computers. Use of the school keyword booklets, containing French and German sections enables teachers to make a good contribution to literacy. Good classroom practice is not shared in the department and standards of teaching and preparation vary from very good to unsatisfactory. The school chooses not to employ foreign language assistants.
- 151 Accommodation is now far better than at the time of the last inspection. Resources are mainly good and there is good and useful classroom display. One feature not mentioned in 1994 is the high quality of visits and exchanges offered to pupils - a real strength of the department. Much of the department's work remains as reported in 1994 but in some respects there has been regression. Pupils are less confident and less independent; the foreign language is used less effectively in some lessons; some lessons are not planned so as to ensure equal progress in all four skills. Assessment is now a significant weakness. Work is marked conscientiously but there is no use of the National Curriculum. Levels are entered on Year 9 reports but pupils do not know what they mean or what they have to do to improve. There is no stock of agreed marked work to guide teachers in their judgement of levels. The development plan for 1998-2000 has not been reviewed and there is no new plan in place. Improving GCSE results is a target but there has been no analysis of results in order to form new strategies.

MUSIC

- 152 In 1999 the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A* - C at GCSE was below the national average. Results for 2000 show a significant improvement on 1999 results with a greater number of pupils achieving A* - C. Because of the small entry numbers comparison with national figures are not reliable. Since the last inspection results have fluctuated and are affected by the size and range of attainment in each cohort.
- 153 During the inspection there was insufficient evidence on which to base a judgement

about pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 because recordings of pupils' composing and performing work from the previous academic year had not been retained. In the lessons observed pupils' standards of attainment are below national expectations. This is because the time allocation for music is insufficient to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. This was also commented on in the previous report. The 'carousel' system of timetabling art and music has a detrimental effect on the continuity of learning with as much as a term's gap between one module of music and the next in Year 7. In a Year 9 lesson pupils could play most of the 'Largo' theme from Dvorak's symphony quite fluently with suitable fingering and using single-finger chord accompaniment. However, they lack knowledge and understanding of staff notation and were too reliant on having the letter names on the worksheet and stuck on the keyboard. Only higher attaining pupils, who are often those receiving instrumental lessons, in Years 8 and 9 are achieving expectations for performing. No difference was observed between the attainment of girls and boys. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in lessons and make satisfactory progress. This is because of the strengths of the teaching and the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.

- 154 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. The performing skills of pupils in Year 11 are above average and the listening skills of the higher attainers are very good. Keyboard players could play 'Land of Hope and Glory' fluently with fingered chords. Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well in the three components of performing, composing and listening. Pupils taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11 receive instrumental or singing tuition and this has a very positive impact on all aspects of their GCSE work. In Year 10 pupils achieve appropriately in composing and performing. All pupils can effectively compose short ideas and perform them within a structure.
- 155 Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils work co-operatively in groups on performing tasks and when sharing keyboards often helping each other to learn. They listen with interest to performances by other members of the class.
- 156 The quality of teaching is good. The teacher has good subject knowledge and uses her own instrumental and vocal expertise effectively to help pupils' learning and to provide a good role model. Pupils are managed well and praise is used very effectively with the result that pupils concentrate throughout the lesson and make progress. Lessons include a good variety of activities with time limits set, which results in pupils maintaining their interest and concentration and working productively. The teacher moves around the class effectively assessing pupils' instrumental playing and their composing so that pupils learn how to improve what they are doing or move on to the next step. However, learning objectives are not clearly linked to developing skills, knowledge and understanding in performing, composing and appraising which means that pupils do not always know what they are expected to have learned by the end of a lesson. Materials and tasks are not always well matched to pupils' different levels of attainment within a class. Consequently pupils do not always make sufficient gains in their learning by the end of the lesson.
- 157 The department is well managed by a head of department who is committed to moving the department forward. The quality of the department's development plan is good and identifies appropriate priorities such as the new national curriculum, assessment at Key Stage 3 and information and communications technology but finances have not been allocated to these priorities. The head of department has not been involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the department or in the

monitoring of teaching as there are no school systems in place to ensure that this takes place regularly.

- 158 The department has already made a good start on assessing pupils' attainment using the new National Curriculum levels for music. Records of achievement are used effectively to record pupils' achievements. However, modules of work do not include specific criteria for assessing composing and performing skills which would then inform pupils of what they would need to do to achieve a particular grade or level. There is also a lack of target setting to enable individual pupils to make progress towards achievable goals in their performing, composing and appraising skills. Pupils taking GCSE music are suitably assessed against criteria in the examination syllabus and pupils are given support and advice on how to improve their attainment in each of the three course components.
- 159 The music curriculum does not yet meet statutory requirements in the use of information and communications technology by pupils in lessons at Key Stage 3. This is because the department does not have appropriate equipment such as keyboards with sequencing facilities or a computer with music sequencing software. There have been no developments in the use of information and communications technology in lessons since the last inspection. Schemes of work are in place to support teaching but do not show the development and progression of specific composing, instrumental, singing and appraising skills across the key stage in sufficient detail. The subject's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- 160 Extra-curricular provision is good and has a positive effect on developing pupils' performing skills. Instrumental tuition is well organised and provides opportunities for pupils to learn to sing or to play woodwind instruments, guitar, drum kit, keyboard and violin. Many pupils successfully develop their performing skills by participating in the school production, which will be 'Oliver' in 2001, or in the school Spring Concert and the 'Young World' Concert at Sheffield Arena. Rehearsals for these take place at lunchtime or after school and attract a high level of pupil participation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 161 GCSE results in 2000 represent a considerable improvement on results in 1999. In 1999 only 30 per cent of pupils gained a grade C or above and no pupils gained the higher grades A*/A grades. This year 74 per cent of pupils gained grade C or above and 13 percent gained the higher grades. This compares very well with the national results, although the comparison has not been officially confirmed. Few pupils go on to represent the area or the county but two or three boys are regularly selected to join football academies at local clubs.
- 162 In Key Stage 3 both boys and girls achieve a standard that is in line with what is expected nationally in activities where they have had sufficient experience. Standards in basketball and in boys' rugby are better than seen in other schools, both in terms of skill acquisition and tactical awareness. Girls in Year 7 have a good understanding of the game of netball; their basic skills of throwing and catching and their footwork are as would be expected at this age. However, the standard of girls' volleyball in Year 9 is lower than seen nationally because it is their first experience of the game. In Key Stage 4 standards in hockey are below those seen in other schools, particularly for boys but this again is because they have not experienced hockey before Year 10. Standards in trampolining are also below what would be expected nationally because they have not done the activity before. Standards seen

in GCSE lessons are in line with what would be expected at the beginning of Year 11 and pupils are on target to achieve some good results, including the higher grades. Their planning and evaluative skills are good.

- 163 Teaching within the department is nearly always satisfactory or better and in basketball, particularly, it is very good. In the best lessons learning objectives are very specific and in all lessons these are shared with pupils. When the learning objectives are used specifically to plan a series of activities that progressively build skills and extend pupils' understanding pupils make good gains in their learning. For example, in a basketball lesson where pupils were to learn the lay-up shot the warm up was related to the development of this technique. There were good demonstrations by both the teacher and pupils; there was the opportunity to practice the skill individually and, finally, the game was conditioned so that they could use the technique without being tackled. There was good feedback to the pupils on their skill improvement. All pupils were in no doubt about what they were learning and many achieved a good technique by the end of the lesson. In lessons where the learning objectives are too broad and activities not sufficiently focused on what pupils should be learning pupils' achievements are only satisfactory.
- 164 Teachers have very good relationships with pupils characterised by mutual respect and warmth. This ensures that pupils come to lessons with a very positive attitude and willing to learn. The number of pupils that bring their kit and participate in lessons is good and has improved since the previous inspection. In a Year 11 trampoline lesson pupils made good progress in learning to do a swivel hips and a seat drop to front drop. This is because there were good demonstrations by the teacher so pupils knew what they were trying to do and because pupils were very supportive of each other. There was spontaneous and genuine applause for the teacher's demonstrations and when pupils achieved the technique they had been working on. In mixed groups relationships between boys and girls are good which helps their learning. Behaviour is very good at all times and only when there is lengthy teacher talk does inattention creep in. Where lessons have well chosen activities, variety and pace pupils maintain involvement and concentration even when they have to sit out for short breaks due to limited space for the size of the group.
- 165 All lessons finish with a good summary of what the lesson has been about and this often involves questioning the pupils to assess what they have learnt. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for through good use of their individual education plans in planning and skilful involvement of them in the lessons. There are, however, too few opportunities for pupils to practice their evaluative skills through observing and coaching each other. Teachers have good observational and analytical skills but in some lessons these skills are not always used to identify weaknesses in skills practices and to re-focus the practices on those weaknesses. For example, in a netball lesson pupils difficulties in sustaining passing was largely because of their weaknesses in catching but this was not picked up and worked on. There are no arrangements within the department for teachers to observe each other teaching and to share and develop good practice through this observation.
- 166 The curriculum meets the previous national curriculum requirements and is broad and balanced at both key stages. There is a good range of activities although there is no progression for boys in hockey, which they do for one year, and pupils who are keen on dance or gymnastics in Key Stage 3 cannot continue this in Key Stage 4. This has an impact on the standards that pupils reach in specific activities. At the time of the previous inspection standards in hockey were also identified as being below what is expected. There is a good range of extra curricular activities bearing in mind that there are only two full-time teachers in the department. There is a very

detailed assessment scheme but the recording of the information, whilst it enables teachers to provide good information to parents does not enable teachers or parents to know whether pupils are making progress or not. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs but there is insufficient emphasis on identifying the gifted and talented pupils, with the exception of football and basketball, and through provision both within the school and outside, ensuring that they reach the standards of which they are capable.

- 167 The department is well organised and well led. Schemes of work are regularly reviewed and plans are in place to develop the new national curriculum. The contribution that the department makes to the development of literacy skills has been identified and there are good opportunities for pupils to use their speaking and listening skills. The department development plan is very limited and does not focus on raising standards. It does not reflect school priorities because there has been insufficient guidance to staff on development planning. Planning was an issue at the time of the previous inspection. Good use is made of the accommodation available which outside has a number of difficulties. The netball courts are not marked and the grass on the field is not kept short enough for hockey and is susceptible to flooding. This remains an issue from the previous inspection.