

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST AMBROSE COLLEGE**

Hale Barns, Altrincham.

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 131315

Head Master: Mr MD Thompson

Reporting inspector: Mr T Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> December 2000

Inspection number: 224019

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Wicker Lane Hale Barns Altrincham Cheshire
Postcode:	WA15 0HE
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Kinsella
Date of previous inspection:	No previous inspection

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Ted Wheatley	<i>Registered inspector</i>		How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
Norman Shelley	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mary Sewell	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.	
John Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
David Tracey	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
Lynne Kauffman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology. Information technology.	
Jackie Goodman	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art.	
Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	How well are pupils and students taught?
Pat Mitchell	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	Sixth form.
Ros Fox	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
David Wigley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music; Equal opportunities.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
Gill Salter-Smith	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Ambrose College is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided grammar school with 778 boys aged 11 – 18 and is smaller than other secondary schools. The school was founded in 1946 by the Congregation of Christian Brothers as an independent, fee-paying Roman Catholic boys' grammar school. The school changed to grant maintained status in 1997, and then became a voluntary aided grammar school within Trafford education authority in September 1999. It is the only Roman Catholic boys' grammar school in the local authority. Twenty-one pupils (2.6 per cent) are entitled to free school meals, which is well below average. No pupils are identified with special educational needs and no pupils have English as additional language.

Pupils take an entrance examination at the age of eleven and each boy's religious background is explored at interview. Available details show that attainment on entry to the school is well above average overall, and that, in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests, all of the boys obtained at least Level 4 in the English, mathematics and science tests. That is, no boy fell below average in any of these key subjects.

The priorities of the college improvement plan are to develop the curriculum, management, teaching and learning, consultation and communication, premises and buildings, and also to provide targets for staff to work towards. The new head master took up appointment officially in September 2000.

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

St Ambrose College is a school with some good features. The standards achieved by boys are well above those achieved nationally and teaching is good overall. The new head master, with support from the senior management and the governing body is giving very clear direction for how the school should develop. This is an improving school which provides satisfactory value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Senior management, in particular the head master, is giving very clear direction for the school to plan its development and make improvements.
- Results in examinations are well above the national averages at the end of Key Stage 3, and at GCSE and A-Level. The proportions of boys obtaining A\*/A grades in art, French, German, geography and history at GCSE in 2000 were particularly high.
- The attitudes of boys to their work are very good.
- Attendance is very good.
- The range of extra-curricular sports activities provided by the school is very good.
- Parents make a significant contribution to the resources and work of the school.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The achievement of the highest attaining boys in some subjects
- The curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 so that it meet statutory requirements, and the choice of subjects at Key Stage 4 to provide a balanced experience for all boys.
- The provision for pupils who experience learning difficulties.
- The procedures for monitoring academic performance and providing support and guidance.
- The delegation of responsibilities and development of management roles.
- The monitoring and quality of teaching and sharing of good practice.
- The school's accommodation and resources, and their efficient use.

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

The school has not been inspected under the Ofsted framework and, until 1997 it was not subject to the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, or to other requirements that state schools have had in place for several years.

It was not until April 2000, when the governors appointed a new head master with experience of the state system, that the school produced its first development plan (the college improvement plan). The priorities for developments in curriculum, management, teaching and learning, consultation and communication, premises and buildings, and targets for staff are clear, realistic and open to discussion and further development. The level of involvement of staff is increasing and there is a high level of commitment to change and development amongst staff and governors. The school has considerable work to do, and the improvement plan shows clearly what has to be done to improve the quality of education and raise standards. The school's priorities for development match the issues raised by the inspection team, and plans to address these issues are already being implemented. The capacity of the school to improve is good.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	B
A-Levels/AS-Levels	A	A*	A*	

<b>Key</b>	
<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

In the 2000 end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests, the attainment of boys in English, mathematics and science was in the top five per cent of schools nationally. More boys obtained the higher levels in mathematics and science than in English. Compared with other grammar schools, results were average overall. Results in mathematics have improved since 1999, results in science have been maintained and results for English have got worse.



At GCSE in 2000, 98 per cent of boys obtained five or more A\*-C grades, which was in the top five per cent of schools nationally and average compared with other grammar schools. Results have improved since 1999. Results were better in French, geography and history than in other subjects and they were lower by comparison in English language, physics and technology. The school achieved its targets of 92 per cent of boys obtaining five or more A\*-C grades and 99 per cent obtaining one or more A\*-G grades, but these targets were too low.

The percentage of students obtaining A/AS Level passes was high in 2000 and results were better than in 1999. All students passed further mathematics and A Level German; 67 per cent of students obtained A or B in German. Results were good in chemistry, history, mathematics and physics. In other subjects results varied but national comparisons are not possible because numbers entered were small, although there were no higher grades in economics.

Inspection findings support evidence from examinations. Attainment is well above average overall, and reflects attainment on entry to the school. Boys' achievements are sound overall, and those of many boys are good. However, for some highest attaining boys, achievements are not high enough. Boys make sound progress in literacy and numeracy skills, but Information and communications technology (ICT) skills are underdeveloped, but the school has made strenuous efforts to rectify this through purchasing computers during autumn 2000 and providing opportunities immediately for boys to develop their skills.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Boys' attitudes to school, both to the work in classrooms and to the extra-curricular activities provided, are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons is very good, and is generally good around school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between boys are very good. Boys are very considerate towards each other, particularly in lessons. Personal development is sound overall; a significant proportion of boys take on responsibilities, but opportunities are limited for others.
Attendance	Attendance is very good and is well above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall. In 95 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better; in 45 per cent of lessons it is good and, in 22 per cent of lessons, very good or occasionally excellent. Five per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory, all at Key Stages 3 and 4. In English, teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally very good., although lesson planning is not always focused so that learning intentions are clear. Occasional insecurity in the subject matter leads

to a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In mathematics, teaching is generally sound, and often good. Teachers are well organised although lessons do not always meet the needs of the highest attainers. Science teaching is good overall, with nearly 22 per cent of lessons being very good.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good, aiding clear explanations that ensure boys learn well. Planning of lessons is good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, although the continuity between lessons is not always firmly established, for example, in English. Expectations are sound, although they are better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to investigate, research or to engage in independent learning and this particularly affects the progress of some of the highest attaining boys. Marking is used well in modern languages, science, mathematics, design and technology, physical education and art to guide pupils and improve their learning. Homework is good at KS4 and in the sixth form, and is used very well in design and technology and modern languages to encourage boys to extend their knowledge and understanding. The learning needs of the majority of boys are met, although a few boys who have physical learning difficulties are not catered for. Although most teachers provide challenging work, there is no overall policy to promote teaching approaches suited to the highest attaining boys in the school.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally good, although there are no whole-school policies. Nevertheless, literacy and numeracy are an integral part of most subjects and boys develop a good range of skills which help them perform well in examinations. The teaching of ICT skills is unsatisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3, statutory requirements are not met for English, mathematics, art or design and technology. At Key Stages 3 and 4, statutory requirements for ICT are not met and some Year 11 boys do not follow a mathematics course for the whole year. At Key Stage 4 the allocation of time is unbalanced and the options system restricts choices in some subjects. Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is unsatisfactory overall. There is no established means to identify boys who have any form of learning difficulties, and no one with responsibility for organising a support programme.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is satisfactory overall. Provision for moral and social development is good. The school establishes a firm moral code amongst boys.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Procedures to promote attendance and good behaviour are sound. The monitoring of personal development and academic performance is sound but guidance and support for individual boys is inconsistent, though often good.

Reports to parents are often brief, providing too little detail of what pupils know, understand and can do. Parents work closely with the school and generally have good levels of contact with teachers. Parents give an exceptional level of support at parents' evenings and for activities organised by the school. They contribute generously to the funds of the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headmaster and other key staff	The headmaster provides a clear vision for how the school needs to develop and he is well supported by senior staff and governors. Management roles are generally underdeveloped, but are given major priority in the college improvement plan as a significant factor in helping the school to improve and raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Overall the governing body is effective in its responsibilities. Governors support the headmaster and have a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. However, they do not meet their statutory responsibilities to ensure the National Curriculum is fully in place, or to ensure that the school's prospectus contains all of the information required by law.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's procedures to evaluate its performance are unsatisfactory. Initial developments in evaluating teaching and the work of subject departments, and examining the cost of the curriculum are good, but not enough staff are involved. Analysis of examination information is in its early stages.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are not used effectively, although, in the short time the headmaster has been in post, there have been improvements and plans are detailed to monitor expenditure closely and to ensure that resources are more efficiently purchased and deployed. Application of best value principles have improved but are still unsatisfactory.

The school has limited accommodation that limits the range of activities that can take place in technology, art, English, mathematics and science. The library is not well enough equipped to support independent learning and the school does not have enough books to suit the needs of all boys. There are too few computers, and this affects standards in ICT. The school has sufficient staff but does not deploy them effectively to meet the needs of the National Curriculum.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their sons enjoy going to school.</li> <li>• Boys make good progress in the work.</li> <li>• The behaviour of boys is good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and expectations are high.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led.</li> <li>• The school helps the boys become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant proportion of parents feel that the school does not work closely enough with them.</li> <li>• A small proportion of parents consider that the school does not provide the right amount of homework.</li> <li>• A small proportion of parents feel that the school does not keep them sufficiently well informed about their sons' progress.</li> <li>• Some parents consider that the school does not address their concerns well.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that there are not enough out of school activities.</li> </ul>

Overall inspectors agree with the strengths parents identify. The school works closely with parents and addresses parental concerns. However, there are inconsistencies and lack of a structured pastoral system means that parents receive different experiences in their dealings with the school. Reports to parents do not always provide information on boys' knowledge, understanding and skills, and on what they need to do to make further progress. The quantity of homework is broadly satisfactory. The range of extra-curricular sport is very good.

At the meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection, some parents expressed concern at low expectations. Inspectors found that expectations were generally satisfactory and often high, but not high enough for some of the highest attaining boys. Concern was also expressed at the numbers of temporary teachers taking lessons in English and mathematics. Inspectors considered that this impedes progress to some extent, but that the school was doing all that it could to minimise the problem. Some parents also expressed their concern about bullying; inspectors found that where complaints were received the school dealt with them well.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Attainment on entry to the school is well above average. In 2000, all boys reached at least the average levels expected in National Curriculum tests taken in the last year in primary schools.
2. In the end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in 2000, all pupils achieved the average Level 5 or higher in English, mathematics and science. The proportions of boys reaching the higher levels was very high compared with the national average in mathematics and science and above average in English. Compared with other grammar schools, the proportions at the higher levels were broadly average in mathematics and science and below the average for English. Results in mathematics have improved since 1999, results in science have been maintained and those for English have got worse. The average points scored in the three subjects are very high compared with all schools nationally, but are below average compared with other grammar schools.
3. In 2000, 98 per cent of boys obtained five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE. This was very high compared with the national average, but, average compared to the performance of pupils in grammar schools. This was an improvement from 1999, when results were well below the average for similar schools. The boys who took GCSE examinations in 2000 also particularly well in their end of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests and, by the school's analysis, they were a particularly able year group. There were variations between subjects: the proportions of boys obtaining the higher grades in French, geography and history were higher than in other subjects, but they were low by comparison in English language, physics and technology. Numbers taking GCSEs in art, German and Latin were too low to make fair comparisons.
4. The school's analysis of its GCSE results has shown some underachievement at the highest grades. It has also shown that the school's targets, of 92 per cent of boys obtaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE and 99 per cent obtaining one or more A\*-G grades, were too low. Predictions based on standard assessment tests support this view and show that the target for boys achieving five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE should have been close to 100 per cent. This type of analysis is a new development for the school, and is in the early stages of being used to provide individual targets for boys. Targets for 2001 are rightly being reviewed to take into account boys performance in end of Key Stage 3 tests in 1999.
5. The percentage of students obtaining A/AS Level passes was high in 2000 and an improvement on the results of 1999, with an increase in the average points scored by A-Level and AS-Level candidates. There were some differences between subjects. In further mathematics, all students obtained A/B grades; in German 67 per cent of students did. The results in chemistry, history, mathematics and physics were also good. Small numbers were entered for economics, music, classical civilisation and politics so valid comparisons are not possible, although no higher grades were obtained in economics.

6. Inspection findings support evidence from examinations. Attainment is well above average overall, and reflects attainment on entry to the school. Achievement is sound overall and, for many boys, it is good. The pattern is the same at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. There are too few opportunities for boys to work independently, to undertake investigative work, to research and become actively involved in their own learning. There is little investigative work in mathematics and, in some science and geography lessons, boys are directed so inflexibly that they do not have opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. However, there is also good practice; in some science lessons, for example, boys are challenged to explain ideas developing from practical work. In some modern language lessons in the sixth form, students are not expected to converse in the target language; in others they do, and the difference in progress is evident. The lack of independent and investigative work and opportunities for research affect the progress of some boys. This is most noticeable among some highest attaining boys, but is also evident among other boys of all abilities, so that they do not achieve as well as they should. In other approaches to work, boys make good progress. They acquire a great deal of knowledge, largely as a result of the subject expertise of teachers and the clear way in which factual information is transmitted.

7. Generally, boys make sound progress in literacy and numeracy skills, although the school does not have the literacy or numeracy policies, that are required. Information and communications technology (ICT) skills are underdeveloped, but the school has made strenuous efforts to rectify this through purchasing computers this term (autumn 2000) and providing opportunities immediately for boys to develop their skills. Although the progress of boys is sound it could be better.

8. Standards of speaking and listening are generally satisfactory and sometimes very good. In history and some geography lessons, for example, boys ask questions and use concise language to draw sharp, clean conclusions. Standards of reading are good. Boys confidently explore a variety of texts and read with a high level of understanding. They select, retrieve and organise information well to support the work they do. Standards in writing are satisfactory and in the sixth form are good. Some subject areas have technical vocabulary displayed to assist the boys' spelling, for example, in English and mathematics. Boys of all ages write in a variety of styles, For example, in geography boys wrote 'travel brochures' and 'newspaper pages' as well as reports. The best examples of extended writing were in science, and in history where pupils confidently wrote a play on life in a medieval village. Work is well presented, especially in coursework. The boys obviously take a pride in their work and take time to word process pieces at home.

9. Boys' numeracy skills are good overall. Although there is no whole-school policy, numeracy skills are taught in science, geography and history. Boys handle numerical information well. In science they use statistical information well, present data in graphs, charts and tables to support and explain the work they do. In geography, boys collect information and interpret it thoughtfully to help them understand the subject better.

10. Boys' attainment is well above average in science. Boys of all abilities and at all stages of their education make good progress, although in a few lessons the limited range of learning opportunities means that some boys do not develop independent learning skills. Boys' scientific enquiry skills and understanding of scientific theories develop well as they move through the school.

11. The school has not identified any boys with special educational needs. There is a level of individual support provided for boys with learning difficulties, but it is informal, and these boys make sound progress overall. Gifted and talented boys are not identified; those recognised by the inspection team make satisfactory progress. There are no planned opportunities for research or independent work limit these boys' progress but where there is particularly imaginative teaching, for example in history, these boys make good progress.

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

12. Boys are very enthusiastic about the school. Their behaviour and personal development are good and their attendance is very good. Parents are pleased with standards of behaviour and personal development.

13. Boys are keen to come to school and they feel part of the school community. They enjoy almost all of their learning experiences, and their serious and positive attitude towards work contributes to the standards they achieve. The level of participation is high in sport and good in the other activities that are available. Places on educational and leisure excursions are always taken up.

14. Behaviour in lessons is good overall. It is often very good and sometimes exemplary. This has a very positive effect on the quality of learning. Boys listen well, rarely waste time and participate with interest. In a very few lessons, some boys fail to exercise appropriate self discipline. Outside classes, conduct is almost always orderly and boys show consideration to each other and adults by opening doors for others and offering greetings. Occasionally, behaviour becomes rowdy and the few boys involved are inconsiderate of the affect on others. Some boys say that a small amount of bullying occurs in the school, a view supported by some parents. However, the school has an anti-bullying policy and deals with issues as they arise. Parents report that there are fewer incidents since the new headmaster has taken up post. Last year the number of exclusions was low.

15. The Catholic ethos of the school promotes a sense of care and respect. This is reflected, for example, in prayers said for those who are bereaved and for the needy. Boys participate in the prayers seriously and clearly respect the feelings and plight of others. Through religious education, they begin to understand the beliefs and values of others, and the complexities of life, for example, through profound discussions of such topics as euthanasia. Generally, pupils show respect for learning resources and the school, but during the inspection a significant amount of litter was seen in the school and grounds.

16. Boys relate very well to each other. When given the opportunity, they co-operate very well in paired and group work. They are mutually supportive and respect each other's efforts and views. They are very competitive but work together well in teams, and this serves them very well, particularly in sport. Boys of all ages respond well to being given responsibility, whether it is within their work or by being given a particular role, such as that of prefect. Boys use their initiative, for example, in organising sponsorships, and they raise substantial sums to support charities. Community service and charity work are available in the school



and this provides boys with opportunities for personal development. Boys make some progress in developing problem solving, thinking skills, research, time management and self evaluation. However, this too is limited, partly because personal, social and health education has only recently begun, and also because such skills are not consistently developed in teaching across all subjects of the curriculum.

17. Attendance is very good and is well above the national average. Truancy is very low and the large majority of reasons for late arrival at school relate to unreliable bus services. This demonstrates very positive commitment to the school and education by boys and parents.

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

18. Teaching is good overall and is a strength of the school. In 95 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better; in 45 per cent of lessons it is good and, in 22 per cent of lessons, very good or occasionally excellent. Five per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching is similar in all three age groups, although there is more good and very good teaching at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is good or very good in 75 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form; 20 per cent is very good in Key Stage 4 and, after the age of sixteen, this improves further. At Key Stage 3, eight per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory, and at Key Stage 4, four per cent is unsatisfactory. Planning of lessons is broadly satisfactory and is more often good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, where examination work is the prime focus. This has a significant effect on the quality of work provided for boys and leads to generally high levels of attainment. Teachers' subject knowledge is good overall and leads to clearly presented explanations, technically accurate information and good use of subject specialist terminology which allow pupils to develop their own good knowledge and understanding.

19. Teaching in science is frequently good with well organised and prepared lessons and clear objectives. Teaching in English is satisfactory overall, but long-term teacher absence has caused some problems in ensuring continuity of experience for boys. Lesson planning is not always clearly focused and when this is coupled with occasional insecurity in the subject matter taught and some undemanding work, there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. However, there is also some very good teaching in English. Teaching at Key Stage 3 in music is unsatisfactory overall because there are inadequate schemes of work, poorly planned lessons, lack of adherence to the National Curriculum programmes of study and some unsatisfactory or weak classroom management. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching elsewhere where the pace of work is occasionally slow and where the boys are not sufficiently challenged.

20. Teachers' expertise in long-term planning for GCSE and A/AS Level examinations, is starting to be applied at Key Stage 3; the weaknesses occur where there is unfamiliarity with the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. For example, in science, mathematics and PE, full implementation of the National Curriculum requires a greater variety of approaches. Most schemes of work tend to be content-based and do not yet give sufficient consideration to appropriate teaching methods; nor do many of them include guidance for the use of information technology. Consequently, investigative and problem solving skills are underdeveloped and ICT skills are unsatisfactory. However, the planning of lessons is secure and sound learning objectives are mostly carefully translated into well-taught lessons.

21. Teachers' expectations of boys' learning and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Good behaviour and the completion of homework are assumed, and both make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. However, there is sometimes an assumption that boys will attain well in examinations, and occasionally insufficient challenge is provided for the highest attaining boys. Boys are not consistently expected to explain their knowledge or understanding at length, or to find out for themselves or to discuss sophisticated ideas.

22. The range of teaching methods used is good overall. There is a consistent focus on providing pupils with knowledge and ensuring that they are well prepared to meet the academic demands of examinations, and, to this extent, methods are effective. In design technology and history, methodology is varied and pupils learn very well; they learn how to plan their work and to research for themselves. However, in some art, mathematics, science and physical education lessons, the clear direction and guided learning limit opportunities for pupils to investigate, solve problems and to become independent learners. There is some good practice; for example, in geography the boys are provided with materials to research issues surrounding the Kobe earthquake. The pace of lessons is good overall, although there are instances of lessons that take a long time to get to the main objective. Teachers use available resources well to aid their teaching; for example, in science and design and technology where there is a wide range of practical work to support learning and develop skills.

23. The boys are managed well at Key Stage 3 and very well at KS4 and in the sixth form. Control is firmly maintained by a strong focus on the task in hand and the boys generally work very hard, productively and at a good pace in response. Concentration and interest in class are very good and are a result of good teacher knowledge and a shared view of achieving well in examinations. Intellectual effort varies with expectation. For example, sixth form boys in French tend not to use the target language but to speak in English because there is no expectation that they should speak in French.

24. Teachers use on-going assessment well overall, and better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3. Day to day assessment in science, modern foreign languages and mathematics is good, but is unsatisfactory in art. The marking of books is thorough, gives clear indication of what boys have achieved and guides them in their learning. Teachers generally intervene well in class to correct misunderstandings and provide guidance to help boys continue to make sound progress. However, subject departments do not consistently make use of available information on the boys' levels of attainment on entry to the school as a means to monitor the attainment and progress of classes and individuals so that targets may be set to aid the boys' learning. Analysis of examination results, in order to plan for improvement, is in its early stages, and is encouraged and supported by the head master and senior staff.

25. The use of homework is good overall; it is particularly good in design technology, where most lessons begin with good feedback from the previous homework. This has a positive effect on helping boys develop independent learning skills and to plan and design confidently. The setting of homework is unsatisfactory in some parts of the English department, particularly in Years 8 and 10; there is no consistency in frequency or in the challenge of work set.

26. There is no whole school policy for literacy, and the teaching of literacy skills is not co-ordinated across the school. However, literacy is included in statements in English, science, music, history and business studies and there is evidence of some good teaching across the curriculum. At Key Stage 3, teachers are only just beginning to realise the need for pupils to write and speak in a variety of styles; for reports, newspaper articles, letters and imaginative writing, for example. There is good practice in history, and emerging good practice in geography.

27. The teaching of numeracy skills across subjects of the curriculum is unplanned. However, individual approaches in subjects is generally good and leads to boys being numerate and applying their arithmetical and statistical skills well in science, for example, and very well in geography where the skills of boys in managing and interpreting number give them better than usual insights into the subject.

28. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) in lessons is unsatisfactory. ICT is used in design technology, but other subjects make insufficient use of computers to develop computer skills or to widen the learning experiences in subjects. This is a statutory omission that the school is aware of and is working hard to rectify. Many boys have personal computers through which they develop their own high levels of skill that are reflected across the school in homework and in course work. Some boys do not have their own computers, cannot develop the same skills and are placed at a disadvantage.

29. There is no teaching specifically planned to meet the needs of the small number of boys having learning difficulties arising from physical problems. In addition, particularly gifted or talented boys have not been identified and no support tailored to their needs are in place.

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

30. The curricular provision across the school is unsatisfactory. There is a broad traditional curriculum at all key stages, but statutory requirements are not met in English, mathematics, geography and music at Key Stage 3, or in design and technology, and information and communication technology at Key Stage 4. The allocation of time between subjects is unbalanced at Key Stage 3, where science and physical education have a large proportion of time, whilst design and technology has too little. As a result, only a narrow course can be delivered in that subject. The curriculum reflects a strong Christian ethos.

31. The quality and range of learning opportunities is unsatisfactory. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, Latin, a German option in Year 9, ICT and personal, social and health education (PSHE) studies in Years 7 and 9. Most subjects do not include ICT within their schemes of work. The head master and senior management team have initiated improvements in the Key Stage 3 curriculum, but these are at an early stage of development. PSHE has been introduced as a discrete subject, Latin has become an optional subject, and more time has been given for technology. Overall provision for PSHE is unsatisfactory, although where it is taught the quality is good.

32. At Key Stage 4, boys study religious education, English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history and physical education, with geography, music, art, German, and French offered as optional subjects. ICT is not an integral element of all subjects as it should be and the design and technology course is not available to all boys. In Year 11, some boys take mathematics at an intermediate stage during the first term, then use the remaining time either to give further study to other subjects or to take a bridging course to take mathematics to a higher level. This is unsatisfactory, as a significant proportion of boys do not follow a mathematics course for two terms. No vocational courses are on offer at Key Stage 4.

33. There is a traditional range of subjects in the sixth form, with business studies, music, art, politics, economics, French and German being offered in addition to English, mathematics, science, geography, history, physical education and religious education. The range and quality of provision are satisfactory. Boys have to gain five passes with at least a grade 'B' at GCSE in order to gain entry into the sixth form. The school is not inflexible about this, and cases can be negotiated in special circumstances. A number of boys each year seek courses in other establishments. Most students take four subjects to Advanced Supplementary level at the end of Year 12, and then go on to take three or four to Advanced Level, together with General Studies which they take at Advanced Level after a one year course in Year 13. UCAS lessons, through which students are prepared for university entrance, are provided across the key stage. No vocational courses are provided by the school, although some students attend a GNVQ course at a local college of further education.

34. The length of the taught week is below the average time, and not enough time is allocated in Year 9 for art, music, design and technology and ICT.

35. Although the boys have a choice of many subjects to follow, they are of a traditional nature, and do not offer equal opportunities for pupils of all abilities. The limited, though recently improved, provision for ICT throughout the school, puts too much reliance upon resources that some boys have at home, disadvantaging others. History is a compulsory subject at Key Stage 4 whereas geography is not. At the end of Year 9, time allocated to separate sciences adversely affects the provision for German, geography, design and technology, art and music options. Time allocated to science restricts opportunities and flexibility in the timetable to ensure boys have equal opportunities to choose other subjects.

36. The headmaster, senior staff and other staff are aware of the curricular deficiencies and there is a concerted effort to improve the situation. For example, considerable work has been done in the first term the headmaster has been at the school, to purchase, install and use computers, to review the curriculum and plan improvements, and to involve all staff in development to ensure National Curriculum requirements are met.

37. The strategies for teaching literacy skills are satisfactory overall. There is no overall school policy but in most subjects there are effective methods to make sure that boys obtain the necessary skills to express themselves well in examinations. For example, the planned use of extended writing in science, geography and history is good and helps boys express their understanding and knowledge effectively. In English and mathematics, display of key vocabulary assists boys in their technical accuracy in subjects. Similar approaches are beginning to be developed to support learning in Key Stage 3. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills are good. Using numerical information well is key to examination success in several subjects, and although there is no whole school policy, teachers plan opportunities into schemes of work and lessons so that boys have opportunities to acquire the skills they

need. Good examples of planned teaching of numeracy skills were seen in science and geography, where boys were taught how to interpret statistical and graphical information to explain scientific or geographical events.

38. There is a good provision of extra-curricular activities. Physical education and games provision is very good through the vast range of training clubs. A rugby team recently travelled to Canada and a Years 8 and 9 rugby team went to Holland. There are school ski trips. Sixth form students have visited America, Strasbourg and Brussels through the history and politics department. There is a chess club and an after school design and technology practical class. The choir sings at various services and presents a much-appreciated festival of nine lessons and carols, though there was little evidence of any preparation for this year's service. A school play was produced last year, and another one is currently being rehearsed. Almost all Year 7 boys take part in an annual visit to France. Support clubs are run in the science department to support pupils' learning in lessons.

39. The school has satisfactory links in the area of the school and further afield which play a large part in developing boys' awareness of the wider world. Much of this is through the Catholic community. Sixth form students, together with some old boys, join parishioners from Warrington once a year for the Shrewsbury Diocese Pilgrimage to Lourdes. The churches in Hale work together through a variety of activities, and the school is very much involved in these. There are links with the church in South Africa, and also with India through a former pupil who is undertaking missionary work with 'boys on the street' in that country. The local Anglican priest was recently invited to be the guest speaker on speech night, and the head master writes regularly in a local magazine.

40. Links with partner schools are satisfactory overall. Links to ensure smooth transition are good. The head master joins with fellow headteachers from the local Catholic schools, to effect smooth transition between schools. The link teachers visit the schools together in order to meet the transferring pupils, and an induction day is arranged. There are no subject links between the school and its contributory schools, or bridging projects which might bring them together. There is no sharing of teaching or resources. End of Key Stage 2 national tests results are received from some, but not all, schools.

41. The organisation of the sixth form is sound overall. The sixth form is divided into tutor groups with a head of sixth form who has a predominantly mentoring role. There is no cohesive general studies programme although a series of lessons is provided by a small team of teachers. Lessons mainly consist of working through past examination papers with instruction about their content.

42. Good arrangements are made for students to visit universities including Oxbridge. Sometimes a school group will have a special visit and go by minibus. The new careers teacher is greatly increasing students' knowledge about opportunities open to them.

43. Careers education and guidance are unsatisfactory, but are improving with the recent appointment of a teacher to take responsibility for and develop careers work. There are few resources to support careers work, although specialised careers guidance is arranged through external agencies and work experience is now starting. A programme of careers lessons, from Year 9 onwards, has commenced and continues to be developed. Boys and parents receive appropriate opportunities to discuss subject options in Year 9. From Year 11 onwards, advice and guidance about careers and relevant studies are inconsistent and this results in some inappropriate choices being made, and in some instances, students not continuing their education after 16 in the school. In the sixth form students receive the help and guidance they need in order to make informed choices about higher education including visits to relevant institutions and talks by university representatives.

44. There is no provision for boys with learning difficulties and the school has no means to identify boys who have special learning needs. A small number of parents expressed concern over this issue at the parents' meeting before the inspection. The school is aware of this gap in its provision and the head master intends to appoint a special needs co-ordinator to take up post in September 2001.

45. Provisions for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall. Provision for boys' spiritual education is satisfactory. Each pupil takes part in an assembly every week. Assemblies encourage spiritual development by raising issues relating to personal decisions and experiences. Morning registration periods often, although not always, contain an act of worship. Some departments have a spirituality policy in place. There are instances of spiritual development within the curriculum, for example in religious education and history, where the spiritual element of life in past centuries is considered, but these are not widespread. Within other subjects there are few planned opportunities to examine the values underpinning subjects or to raise awareness of those elements of subjects that make them special, for example, the conditions under which scientists have made important discoveries.

46. Provision for moral education is good. It is supported by clear expectations of behaviour in most lessons, where pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. The curriculum provides some opportunities for discussion about moral issues. For example, in modern foreign languages, there is discussion about the effects of drugs, alcohol and violence in schools. In English and history, pupils discuss issues relating to violence and oppression. In art, boys in Year 11 explore manifestations of good and evil through visual composition. The science curriculum includes coverage of sex and drugs education. The sixth form, non-prefects as well as prefects, exerts considerable informal influence around the school and many sixth formers provide very good role models for younger boys.

47. The school's provision for social education is good. Within the curriculum, there are opportunities for group work in many subjects, including maths, history, modern foreign languages, design and technology and English. Dependent upon who the form teacher is, registration time is seen by some boys as a valuable opportunity for discussion in an informal but structured context, when the form teacher can engage with the class. The boys' social development is enhanced by a wide range of sport tours, ski trips and adventure holidays abroad, run by the physical education department. The modern foreign languages department offers every boy in Year 7 the opportunity to take part in a residential trip to France and organises visits for boys in Year 13. The science department organises a number of trips and visits, including university visits. The history department takes part in visits organised by the

politics department to Washington, Strasbourg and Brussels. Boys take part in a wide range of clubs and societies and are able to use the art room at lunch time. There is a varied programme of sporting activities. School productions and a debating society also encourage social development and confidence.

48. The sixth form are involved with charity work, much of it through their own Catholic parishes. Money is raised annually to help support a diocesan expedition to Lourdes and some sixth formers go on the pilgrimage to assist with the ill and disabled. There are links with the Christian Brothers' work in Sierra Leone, with the Street Kids Community Village in Vijayawada in South India and with the Catholic Peace and Justice charity among others.

49. Opportunities for personal development are satisfactory overall, and under the guidance of the new headmaster, they are likely to develop further. Some sixth form students run the choir and there are prefects who look after boys in the lower school. A good recent development has encouraged boys to take responsibility for producing a school newspaper. In the sixth form, the boys take responsibility for many of their own affairs. There is a sound range of community work and other activities which many pupils are involved in. Work related experience has only just begun.

50. The contribution of the PSHE programme to social development is unsatisfactory at present, although the planned programme indicates that considerable thought has been put into improving the situation. There are no planned activities for form tutor time. Although there is a considerable range of extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for social development, these are not planned to ensure that all boys experience them.

51. Opportunities for cultural education are satisfactory. In English, boys discuss theatre and read multicultural poetry as part of the GCSE course. In art, contextual studies cover the work of a wide range of artists and pupils research the characteristics of non-western art. The music department organises a band and orchestra, although these are not operating currently. Boys have the opportunity to take instrumental lessons. In history, boys are shown the richness and value of other societies and cultures, for example, the contribution of Islamic societies to western science and architecture. However, no visits to art galleries or artists' residencies currently take place.

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

52. Arrangements for child protection and boys' welfare are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting academic and personal development are unsatisfactory. The majority of parents are satisfied with the school's arrangements but they express concerns about some aspects of pastoral care.

53. Procedures for child protection are in place and arrangements for the general care of pupils are satisfactory. First aid provision is adequate and a medical room is frequently used as a base to care for boys who are unwell. Health and safety procedures are in place and risk assessments and safety checks are carried out.

54. Expectations of good behaviour are implicit in the ethos of the school and have a positive effect on standards. Recognition occurs via merits and celebration in form assemblies. Procedures are effectively used to keep a close check on boys who seriously misbehave. Pastoral files are maintained for all pupils, but mainly to record exceptional incidents. The application of discipline and sanctions by teachers is usually appropriate but some inconsistencies occur due to a lack of clear guidelines.

55. The school has an anti-bullying policy. Some boys and parents said that bullying occurs and that it is not dealt with. However, no evidence was found to support this during the inspection; procedures are sound overall and incidents are followed up, although practice is inconsistent. A small number of boys said they would be hesitant to report bullying incidents.

56. The personal development of boys is not consistently monitored, making it difficult for the school to effectively identify boys' strengths and weaknesses and suggest ways to improve. Boys who are underachieving are usually identified, whether they have learning difficulties or are able boys who are not attaining high enough, and they are encouraged to seek assistance from a subject teacher. However, there is no structured system to ensure that all boys who underachieve are supported, whether they seek help or not.

57. The school's arrangements for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. Assessment is addressed in the college improvement plan and a working party has been set up to review what the school does already, identify what works well, and to establish methods to monitor boys' attainment and progress. Homework diaries are a recent innovation, but they are not yet used as a point of contact between parents and teachers to identify boys' attainment and suggest ways in which progress can be made. Not enough time is set aside in the week for tutors to monitor boys' work or development.

58. There is no overall school assessment policy. However, teachers mark books thoroughly and regularly according to departmental or personal criteria. In examination courses, the day-to-day use of assessment in the classroom is sound and makes a considerable contribution to high standards in modern foreign languages, for example, and to art in the sixth form. Generally good reference is made to the assessment requirements of public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and across the sixth form.

59. At Key Stage 3 teachers are relatively unfamiliar with the levels of attainment of the National Curriculum and rarely link their marking to them. There is a gap between the teachers' assessments of boys' performance at the end of Key Stage 3 and the results they actually achieve in tests. This difference is significant in English for the very highest levels (Levels 7 and 8) and teachers under-estimate the performance of boys in, for example, geography, in relation to the levels of the National Curriculum.



60. The use of assessment information is at a very early stage of development. For example, information from primary schools or from standardised assessment tasks carried out as boys move through the school is not used to identify boys' attainment and to predict their performance in later examinations. Although teachers often have good knowledge of boys' abilities, there is no established systematic use of assessment information to provide targets for boys, or to plan teaching. Nevertheless, the groundwork for an assessment system is in place. Assessment information is now available and teachers are beginning to see the value of analysing examination results and of using the information to influence planning of future lessons and policies.

61. Attendance is recorded satisfactorily, except that some registers are left open in anticipation of late arrivals because of unreliable bus services. Whilst it is understandable, this practice has a safety implication in the event of the school having to be evacuated in an emergency. Absences and late arrival at school are always followed up and reasons obtained.

62. There is no assessment of boys on entry to the school or established connections with primary schools to identify particular learning difficulties, or to identify the learning needs of gifted or talented boys. The school has identified this as an important area for development and the post of special educational needs co-ordinator has been advertised to start to address this issue.

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

63. The school is valued by parents and its partnership with them is good. Parents are very supportive. They are generally pleased with the education that their boys receive, although they believe that some boys could attain higher grades in their examinations. They say that the school is well led and managed and that, in spite of any criticisms, there have been significant improvements recently. Some parents identified inconsistencies in the pastoral care for boys and the amount of homework set, and expressed dissatisfaction with the range of extra-curricular activities and the quality of the information they receive about boys' progress. However, the large majority expressed positive views.

64. The information provided for parents by reports, meetings, newsletters, and the recently introduced gazette and web site is satisfactory overall. The annual review and a drugs awareness evening for parents are good features. The prospectus does not provide all the information required by the Department for Education and parents are not informed well enough about pupils' progress.

65. Annual school reports do not say enough about what pupils know, understand and can do. Reports do not provide targets for boys so that they know how to improve their work or make further progress. Attainment in ICT is not reported. In addition, predicted grades for public examinations are often provided too late to be of value to boys. Improving the quality of reports and the use of assessment information to guide report writing is an area for development recognised by the school. Parents have the opportunity to discuss subject options with tutors.

66. Parents make substantial financial contributions to the school and support the school's public events and meetings very well. There is a very high attendance at parent's evenings. Parents generally provide very good support and encouragement at home, for example, by checking homework diaries and joining school trips. Parents are not significantly involved in the daily life of the school, although a few respond to the invitation to join a weekly mass and some share their business expertise with boys. Some parents offer work experience for boys. Recent moves to seek the views of parents are a positive step to engage parents more closely in the work and development of the school.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

67. The headmaster took up appointment in September 2000 and was attached to the school during the previous term. During that time, the first college improvement plan was produced and a number of significant changes planned. Moves were made to start developments in many aspects of the school's work.

68. The headmaster provides very good leadership and has spelled out clearly to staff what the school needs to do to improve. He and the senior management team are working closely together to plan development and this is proving to be effective. Between them they provide financial, curriculum and timetabling information so that heads of departments are better informed of whole-school issues, for example, the cost of running the school. There is a positive move to develop the roles of heads of department to plan, monitor and evaluate performance, and improve boys' attainment. Presently, head of department roles are under developed, and overall, subject management is unsatisfactory. However, there are instances of good practice in many subjects.

69. The delegation of responsibilities is unsatisfactory overall, but is an issue the headmaster is aware of and, together with governors, is planning to address. Necessarily, this is a long-term priority. Some heads of department are also heads of year and this leads to occasional conflict of interest, or work overload. There is no overall head of science, but heads of biology, chemistry and physics, which entails some job duplication. There are no job descriptions, although all new appointments and posts, whether by internal or external appointment, have detailed, written responsibilities. The management roles of heads of department and heads of year are also in the process of being clearly defined to include responsibilities for development and quality of provision within the subjects. As part of this development, the school has advanced plans for training, to share existing effective practice and establish a whole school approach to middle management issues.

70. The school does not have a special educational needs co-ordinator. However, a post description has been drawn up, the post has been advertised and an appointment is imminent.

71. There is no established system for the observation and evaluation of teaching, nor are other means in place to identify and share what teaching methods work well. Provision of staff development to aid classroom teaching has been erratic; it is improving with a programme of development now in place. Performance management targets are part of the college improvement plan and action on these has started.

72. The governors are committed to the school's improvement and provide a high level of support for the headmaster. They have a shared view of what needs to be done within the

school. Although governors do not fulfil their statutory obligations, their appointment of the headmaster to change and modernise the culture of the school indicates their commitment to improvement. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are developing the means by which they will become more informed about educational issues; about how the school operates day-to-day, and their capacity to help the school.

73. The school's priorities for development are very good. The headmaster, senior staff and governors have produced the first college improvement plan with a clear direction for how the school must develop in order to improve the quality of education. The identified priorities are moving the school in the right direction. They include curriculum development to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and to provide a balanced curriculum for all boys, development of management roles, establishing observation and evaluation of teaching, improving the communication, consultation and decision making processes, and improving the school's accommodation.

74. The sums allocated by the local authority are the same as in most schools nationally, but school has balanced its deficit budget in the current financial year only by very generous donations by parents and from committing all its reserves and assets. This restricts future development. The school is seeking to appoint a head of finance to manage its money and help raise funds from corporate sponsors.

75. The school has moved through three different styles of accounting over a very short period of four years, from being fully independent through being grant maintained to being a voluntary aided state school. It previously adopted a style of accounting that is different from that used in most state schools. A formal audit by the grant maintained school's auditors found that the school's accounts gave a true and fair view of the school's financial state at the set date and that additional funds had been properly disbursed. The school is now buying financial support from the local education authority that has not yet audited the accounts.

76. The governors' finance sub-committee, wisely led through difficult times, monitors spending carefully and makes decisions based on up-to-date information. Information is now circulated in advance of full meetings of the governors so that members have time to consider carefully the financial implications of their decisions. Financial planning is now good, but past spending decisions, for example, on equipping rooms in the new building and appointment of subject specialists, mean that the school has some way to go before best value is obtained for the funds it has at its disposal.

77. The staff are becoming accustomed to considering the financial implications of curriculum planning and are learning to cost their preferred curriculum. The overall cost of teachers is above that seen in most schools. Teaching deployment is not efficient and is unbalanced for the needs of the statutory curriculum. The school employs more science teachers than is usual for the size of school and deploys its staff in a way that maintains smaller sets at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Recent improvements include departmental finances allocated on the basis of an agreed formula and heads of department being informed on their levels of expenditure.

78. Most teachers are well qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach, and although some teach outside their subject expertise, they have sufficient knowledge to challenge and enthuse. Teachers share a common purpose and want to raise standards but

some are unfamiliar with the requirements of the National Curriculum. An imbalance in staffing in departments results from the previous administration of the school, and the headmaster is attempting to correct this. There are no technicians for information and communication technology, design and technology or art, and no foreign language assistants are employed to support French or German. Present deployment of technical support staff is generous for science.

79. The accommodation is inadequate for the needs of the curriculum because there is insufficient space to accommodate the number of pupils in the school and the requirements of some specialist areas. Efforts are made to keep the buildings in a good state of repair, although some of them are old and were designed initially as temporary accommodation. A programme of internal and external improvement is being carried out, which is enhancing both the classroom environment and the safety of the site. Security measures are good, with external lighting, cameras and security locks. It is intended to create an outdoor picnic area in the near future, following suggestions made by the boys. The addition of new teaching spaces for modern foreign languages and design and technology has improved provision, despite a number of problems with the design of these areas. Many classrooms and laboratories are too small to accommodate the required number of pupils comfortably, for example, in art, English and mathematics. Music practice rooms are inappropriately sited some distance from the music room. There are no facilities for the use of three-dimensional materials, for sixth form studio space or for storage in art. Teaching rooms for some subjects are scattered around the site, for example, modern foreign languages and history. There is no designated sixth form study area and facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory. There is no access for boys or adults with disabilities, although there are plans for this to be in place by September 2001.

80. The sixth form is accommodated in a large room which is divided into common room and work areas, but which provides insufficient space for students to work quietly. The area is limited in terms of furniture, lockers, and computers to support students' learning. The sixth form boys raise some money to improve facilities through running a tuck shop.

81. Resources are unsatisfactory overall. In most subjects every boy has at least one text book each and this enables boys to develop good study habits which helps to promote high standards. However, there are shortages of books in geography, art and modern foreign languages and this has a detrimental effect on the breadth of boys' learning experiences. Some texts books used in English, German and geography are very old and in a poor state. Books used in English lessons are too easy and do not match the boys' reading levels.

82. Physical education is well equipped and leads to high standards. There is plenty of equipment to enable investigative work in science. Shortages of equipment in art, design and technology and in music and limited access to audio-visual equipment limits the range of pupils' learning experiences.

83. Despite the recent introduction of two suites of 30 computers, there remains a shortage of computers and suitable software. Access to the computers is limited across the subjects. With the exceptions of art and modern foreign languages, boys are not using computers often enough in their work across the subjects.

84. The library is a spacious and pleasant area for study. It is used frequently by sixth form students. The provision of fiction books is good and there is adequate provision of non-fiction books for most subjects although there is a shortage in geography and some of the books are out of date. The librarian runs a series of introductory lessons for Year 7 boys and these are enjoyed and appreciated by them. Access to the library is limited; it is closed at break times and for part of lunchtimes. There are too few computers available in the library and it under-used as a resource for learning across the school.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

85. The college improvement plan is comprehensive and includes all of the areas for development that the inspection team identified. In the short time the headmaster has been in post, he has raised awareness of a wide range of issues that need to be addressed. Senior management and the school governors support him in this. The school has much work to do, but there is considerable commitment among staff, and much of the good practice required to take the school forward already exists within the school. What the school now needs to do is:

- Raise attainment by:
  - \* ensuring all lessons contain work that challenges all boys;  
(*Paragraphs: 6, 11, 21.*)
  - \* provide opportunities for boys to engage in independent learning and investigational work;  
(*Paragraphs: 6,20, 106, 133*)
  - \* provide opportunities for teachers to observe each other and identify and share existing good practice;  
(*Paragraph: 22.*)
  - \* ensure that all teachers of English work with a common scheme of work.  
(*Paragraph: 19.*)
  
- Improve the curriculum by making sure that:
  - \* National Curriculum requirements for English, mathematics, art, design and technology and information and communications technology are met;  
(*Paragraphs: 7, 31, 32, 103, 106, 107, 122, 147.*)
  - \* all boys receive their entitlement to mathematics throughout Key Stage 4;  
(*Paragraphs: 32, 107.*)
  - \* boys have equal access to all subjects at Key Stage 4;  
(*Paragraph: 32.*)
  - \* time allocated to subjects is appropriate to curriculum demands;  
(*Paragraphs: 31, 35, 128.*)
  - \* whole school policies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills based on existing effective practice are established;  
(*Paragraphs: 26, 27, 37.*)
  - \* all boys are taught a personal, social and health education course.  
(*Paragraph: 31.*)

- Introduce provision for special education needs by:
  - \* *appointing* staff to take responsibility for the development of individual education plans;  
(Paragraph: 70.)
  - \* *establishing* procedures to identify those pupils with special needs, including gifted and talented boys;  
(Paragraphs: 11, 44, 62.)
  - \* ensuring that parental concerns about boys' particular learning needs are formally addressed;  
(Paragraph: 44.)
  - \* preparing teachers to work with boys who have learning difficulties or who are gifted or talented.  
(Paragraph: 29.)
  
- Improve the procedures for monitoring academic performance and providing support and guidance by:
  - \* using assessment information to predict boys' success in public examinations;  
(Paragraph: 60.)
  - \* using assessment information to identify and support those boys who are underachieving;  
(Paragraphs: 24, 57, 59, 60.)
  - \* ensuring that reports on boys' progress that go home to parents or carers consistently comment on what boys know, understand and can do, and provide targets for further improvement;  
(Paragraph: 65.)
  - \* develop the pastoral system to provide structures that are consistently used to monitor boys' personal development and provide them with support and guidance as they need it;  
(Paragraph: 56.)
  - \* sharing existing good practice to produce a whole school approach to assessment.  
(Paragraphs: 58, 59.)
  
- Improve the overall quality of management in the school by:
  - \* producing job descriptions for everyone in the school;  
(Paragraph: 69.)
  - \* ensuring that managers have a clear understanding of their roles in ensuring good quality of provision in their area of responsibility;  
(Paragraphs: 69, 108.)
  - \* providing training for people in management positions so that there is a shared understanding of what management responsibilities are and how they are to be carried out.  
(Paragraph: 69.)

- Establish procedures to observe and evaluate the teaching of all colleagues in order to:
  - \* share existing good practice within subjects and across the school;  
(*Paragraph: 71.*)
  - \* provide targets for teachers to contribute to performance management requirements.  
(*Paragraph: 71.*)
  
- Improve the quality of accommodation and resources of the school, and their use, by:
  - \* exploring ways to increase the accommodation and make better use of that presently available, in collaboration with the local education authority;  
(*Paragraph: 79*)
  - \* improve the range of resources in the library to provide more opportunities for boys to study independently and carry out research;  
(*Paragraph: 84.*)
  - \* improve the range and quality of resources to support the curriculum;  
(*Paragraph: 81, 83.*)
  - \* reviewing staffing levels in all subjects and making appropriate changes which match curriculum needs;  
(*Paragraphs: 78, 128*)

### **Minor issues**

- The school also needs to:
  - \* improve the quality of monitoring and care in the school by formalising existing good practice in dealing with bullying into a whole school policy that is shared with boys and parents;  
(*Paragraphs: 14, 55.*)
  - \* planning the use of ancillary staff to provide adequate levels of support for science, design and technology, art and information and communications technology.  
(*Paragraph: 78.*)
  - \* ensure all boys have opportunities for personal development through the wide range of activities available in school;  
(*Paragraphs: 49, 50.*)
  - \* establish curricular links with primary and preparatory schools;  
(*Paragraph: 40.*)
  - \* continue to develop careers work.  
(*Paragraph: 43.*)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	154
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	21	45	29	4	1	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll	621	157
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	21	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	<b>Y7 – Y11</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	0

<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	5.0
National comparative data	7.9

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	0.1
National comparative data	1.1

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

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	125	N/A	125

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>	
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	124	123	122
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	124	123	122
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (98)	100 (99)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	80 (85)	98 (95)	93 (84)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>	
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	123	124	124
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	123	124	124
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	99 (98)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	90 (81)	96 (95)	81 (96)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	106	N/A	106

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	97	104	106
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	97	104	106
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	91.5 (93)	98.1 (97)	100 (98)
	National	49.0 (46.6)	88.8 (90.9)	94.4 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	N/A
	National	(38.0)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2000	74	N/A	74

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-Levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-Levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	25.16	N/A	25.16 (25)	6.7	N/A	6.7 (6.0)
National	N/A	N/A	18.2 (17.9)	N/A	N/A	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/A
	National		76.5

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	776
Any other minority ethnic group	0

***Teachers and classes***

**Qualified teachers and classes:**

**Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	43.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Education support staff:**

**Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	99

**Deployment of teachers:**

**Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.6
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**Average teaching group size:**

**Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	21.2

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

	<b>Fixed period</b>	<b>Permanent</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	10	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

***Financial information***

Financial year	<b>1999/2000</b>
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	1,878,326.00
Total expenditure	1,842,754.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,438.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	113,698.00
Balance carried forward to next year	149,270.00

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	778
Number of questionnaires returned	243

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	40	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	36	6	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	47	3	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	50	12	5	1
The teaching is good.	41	46	6	2	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	41	10	5	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	36	12	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	32	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	42	15	6	6
The school is well led and managed.	42	37	5	2	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	42	4	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	41	13	6	4

At the meeting before the inspection, a small number of parents expressed concern about low expectations in some lessons. Inspectors found that expectations were generally satisfactory and often high, but not high enough for some of the highest attaining boys. Concern was also expressed at the numbers of temporary teachers taking mathematics and English lessons; inspectors considered that the school was doing all that it could to minimise the problem. Some parents also expressed their concern about bullying; inspectors found that incidents of bullying are dealt with well.

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

### **ENGLISH**

86. Standards of attainment on entry are well above the national average. This high standard is also reflected in the standards being attained at the end of Key Stage 3. In the end of Key Stage 3 national tests in 2000, all pupils reached the average level or higher and a high proportion reached the higher levels. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2000, attainment in the GCSE examinations was well above the national average, with 98 per cent of boys obtaining A\* - C grades in English and 95 per cent in English literature. However, when compared to similar schools, the attainment is less favourable, with underachievement at A\* and A grades in both English and English literature. In comparison with other subjects at GCSE in the school, English and English literature compare favourably. Standards of attainment at A-Level are good with 100 per cent pass rate and 47 per cent achieving A or B grades.

87. The inspection found that attainment is broadly similar to last year in Key Stages 3 and 4 but higher in the sixth form. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 over estimated the levels of attainment of the boys; their results in the national tests were lower than in the teachers' assessments.

88. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards in speaking and listening are good and frequently very good. An excellent example of this was a Year 9 lesson where the boys successfully role-played sporting celebrities who were under pressure to enhance their performance artificially in order to secure sponsorship. This activity enabled them to express their views clearly and cogently whilst maintaining the role of the sports person they were portraying.

89. Standards in speaking and listening at Key Stage 4 are generally very good. In a Year 10 lesson centred on a controversial newspaper article, boys discussed the notion of 'conscience' in a mature and articulate manner. They expressed their opinions and argued their points using a debating approach. They carefully listened to, respected and considered contributions from others. However, in a similar situation, boys had too few opportunities to demonstrate their speaking skills and they performed at a lower level than expected.

90. At A-Level, discussions are analytical, critical and evaluative. An excellent example of this was a Year 13 lesson on Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', when the notion of Utopia was explored in relation to the main characters in the play. This discussion enabled students to explore their own feelings and reactions sensitively, and achieve a deeper understanding of the text. However, there are too few opportunities for speaking in most classes, beyond individual contributions in response to teacher questioning. Some classes are unused to working in groups because opportunities for sharing ideas and developing a wider perspective, or a deeper understanding of the topic, are limited.

91. Standards in reading are well above average at Key Stage 3. Pupils read fluently, explore vocabulary and refer to textual evidence to support a viewpoint. In a Year 8 lesson where pupils read 'Thunder and Lightning' in class, they read around the theme of

'homelessness' using not only texts but a range of websites. Boys confidently retrieved and edited appropriate pieces of information in their own time. This is an excellent example of pupils working independently and managing their own learning. However, inspection evidence revealed too few examples of this.

92. At Key Stage 3, there is a serious mismatch between the books used in lessons and the books read by children on their own. One boy in a Year 8 class had read the 'Iliad' and many others had read Tolkein's novels. The choice of the fiction books used in class is largely determined by the limited provision rather than by the boys' reading interests or learning needs.

93. Standards in reading at Key Stage 4 are well above average; boys read with a good degree of sensitivity and understanding. The best example of this was a year 10 lesson where boys distinguished facts from opinion in an article about 'Rhinoceros'. They learned how vocabulary is manipulated to justify a point of view, showing understanding of the concept of editorial bias. Although the reading materials match the syllabus requirements, there is a heavy reliance on the use of examination materials. The range of available texts is insufficient to provide boys with opportunities to widen their reading repertoire and this has an impact on boys' achievement.

94. Students on the A-Level course read widely. The standards are very high; for example, students studied an extract from 'The Fallen'. They confidently distinguished literary features and explored the wider issues of 'propaganda', censorship and 'the role of women' in seminar style presentations. There was clear evidence not only of an analytical and evaluative level of engagement with the text but also of sensitive personal involvement.

95. Boys' writing at Key Stage 3 is good with most pupils confidently writing in a variety of styles including diaries, brochures and letters. A good example of this was seen in a Year 7 class where boys carried out a survey on 'eating habits' and wrote up their findings in a magazine style article. However, the opportunities for writing frequently fail to challenge boys to their full potential; there are too few opportunities for extended or creative pieces of writing. Boys of this ability should be given much more opportunity to express their own ideas and opinions and develop creativity in a variety of other forms of writing, for example, scripts, poetry and prose. There are also too few opportunities for work to be composed using information technology. The present provision for information technology is poor and does not meet the statutory requirements.

96. Standards in writing at Key Stage 4 vary between groups but are generally good or very good. Most boys are able to produce a wide variety of pieces which clearly demonstrate an understanding of audience and purpose in their writing. The presentation of course work is excellent and shows a high level of commitment to the subject. Boys redraft to improve their work, although in some groups this is little more than a handwriting exercise. Boys also use Information technology as a tool to improve presentation, but this work is done at home.

97. The development of work in the sixth form is helped by students' ability to interpret assessment criteria and match these to features of their own work. Students confidently draft, redraft and edit each other's writing in order to improve standards. Work in the sixth form is of the highest calibre and reflects the partnership in learning which they have developed with their tutors.

98. The standard of literacy across the curriculum is good. Most departments are using a variety of methods to assist both reading and writing although there is no whole school policy for teaching literacy.

99. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with 11 per cent very good, 32 per cent good and 11 per cent unsatisfactory. All teachers display good or very good subject knowledge and many have high expectations of pupils at both key stages. All boys make sound progress overall. However, progress in Key Stage 3 should be better and this is due to a variety of features. In Key Stage 3 some classes do not fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and although schemes are being developed these are not as yet in place. It is therefore too early to see the benefits of a more cohesive and structured approach to teaching. At Key Stage 4 and A-Level, progress is better and the requirements of syllabi are being met. At both key stages the needs of the very high attainers are not being met in full. These boys need identifying early and suitable provision made for them.

100. The assessment of the boys' work is also unsatisfactory. The present system is restrictive; it fails to focus on National Curriculum criteria and does not give advice on how to improve. This means that boys in Year 7 who understood their levels as a result of Key Stage 2 do not have further opportunities of discussing their work in these terms. Assessment improves in Key stage 4, where some teachers share the assessment criteria with the boys, and it is much better at A-Level, where students confidently assess their own work.

101. In the more successful lessons, boys are drawn into taking an active part in the lesson because the tasks are challenging and well structured. A good example of this was a Year 11 lesson on 'An Inspector Calls', where boys learned about monologue by using a carefully constructed guide to reading. However, some teachers set tasks which are frequently inappropriate. Essays entitled 'My most memorable day' or 'My Grandmother' failed to either motivate or inspire boys. In two lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher did not enable boys to express their ideas about issues of 'conscience' in sufficient depth. Homework, although set and marked regularly by most teachers, is not always of a consistent standard and does not contribute as much as it could to learning.

102. Boys' attitudes and behaviour are good at both key stages. Boys respond in a mature manner in discussions and are enthusiastic about their work. They generally sustain concentration and have a business-like approach to their work. In one less successful lesson, more able boys were not stretched sufficiently because the teacher did not provide enough for the boys to do themselves, and the boys lost concentration.

103. The department is led temporarily by an experienced and enthusiastic teacher. He has taken over the teaching of vulnerable examination classes and assisted them through their courses. Well prepared documentation is recently available to guide English teaching and this provides a foundation for teaching and learning to improve. There is considerable work to be done to ensure that National Curriculum requirements, including assessment procedures, are met, so that the boys' development in English is regularly monitored. This will mean the head of department having a coherent and focused overview of the work of the department in order to promote consistent and appropriate teaching for the boys. There is no established procedure for the observation and monitoring of teaching. However, teachers are committed to the teaching of English, and to working as a team to raise standards further.



## MATHEMATICS

104. Attainment on entry to the school is well above average. Results of the National Curriculum tests in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were well above the national average. However, in 1999, when fewer boys achieved Level 7 or above in these tests, the results were below those of similar selective schools. GCSE results were well above the national average in 2000 when compared with all schools and above those of similar schools. Over the last two years, all boys who have been entered for the examination have achieved grades in the range A\*-C. However, a relatively low proportion of the boys achieve the highest grade of A\*. GCE A-Level results have gradually improved and in 2000 97 per cent of the students who were entered gained pass grades. Almost two-thirds of the students gained either grade A or B in 2000, and overall the results were better than those of similar schools. Results in further mathematics, for the few students who have been entered for this examination, have been outstandingly good; in 2000 all three students who were entered gained A grades.

105. In lessons and in the work seen towards the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, attainment of the majority of boys is well above the national average. A top set in Year 9, for example, had a good understanding of scale factors including those that were negative. After initial guidance, the boys were able to enlarge shapes using a range of scale factors. A lower set in the same year had a good understanding of probability and most were able to undertake and complete examples independently. A high attaining Year 11 group quickly grasped the concepts involving vectors during group work, and were able subsequently to undertake and complete examples to consolidate their understanding. Although achievement of the majority of boys at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, in some classes that the most able are insufficiently challenged and, as a consequence, make unsatisfactory progress. Standards in the sixth form are well above the national average and all students achieve well. Students display a wide knowledge of mathematical ideas and are able to apply them to solve a range of problems. A Year 13 class, for example, showed a good understanding of relatively complex statistical aspects relating to correlation. The students were able to use this knowledge to solve a range of examples.

106. Teaching is satisfactory overall and in 47 per cent of lessons it is good. However, there is no very good or outstanding teaching. All lessons are well planned and most contain an appropriate range of activities. Teachers are well qualified and have a good knowledge of the subject. Frequently lessons consist of the teacher giving competent explanations of the subject followed by the boys undertaking related examples to develop understanding and to deepen their knowledge. In a few lessons, pupils are insufficiently involved in aspects of the group work they undertake and are expected to copy notes from the board for too long a period. Overall the range of teaching and learning approaches that are used is relatively narrow. Boys are only required to undertake a restricted amount of work involving investigations and this limits challenging activities for higher attaining boys. There is also little evidence of practical work or of the use of information and communications technology to support teaching and learning. In the investigational and ICT aspects of the department's work, National Curriculum requirements are not met. The management of most classes is effective and boys' behaviour in these is of a very high standard. Particularly in the larger classes, some boys have to wait relatively long periods before receiving the help that they

require, and this slows down their progress. Also, some boys in classes complete examples that are set and have to wait for further work to be provided. Homework is regularly set, marked and returned. Marking includes an indication of how the work may be improved. Overall, boys have a positive attitude to their work. Some boys show a high level of enthusiasm for the subject and most make good responses to the homework that is set.

107. The curriculum meets the needs of the majority of boys in the school. Knowledge, mathematical skills and understanding are progressively developed. Aspects of the mathematics curriculum include the development of the boys' numeracy skills. Overall, these skills are well developed and used in a range of subjects. In science, geography and history in particular, boys work competently with numerical information including its presentation in graphs, charts and tables. The modular scheme at A-Level provides additional flexibility to sixth form students. Students in Year 12 work towards AS Level. Those wishing to continue to study mathematics complete their A-Level in Year 13. Although further mathematics has been operated in the past, inadequate demand means that there are no students currently studying mathematics to this level in the sixth form. Statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are not being met because boys in the lower sets in Year 11 are entered for the GCSE Intermediate level examination in November of each year and following this, no further mathematics work is undertaken, in order to provide more time for study of other subjects. Additionally, the outline schemes of work that have been developed do not contain the required references to the use of information and communications technology to support teaching and learning in mathematics.

108. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Management policies and procedures at the departmental level are underdeveloped. At the time of the inspection, the head of department was on long-term sick leave and a deputy had not been appointed. There is a lack of a formal structure for the mathematics teachers to meet. Although informal discussions are undertaken, the teachers involved largely operate as individuals. Only outline schemes of work are currently in use, though more detailed ones are in the process of being developed. There is no system for the monitoring of teaching and learning and little evidence of the sharing of good practice between teachers. Although work is regularly marked, there is no agreed assessment policy. As a result, teachers use a range of criteria and approaches when marking the boys' work. Reviews of the work of the department are not undertaken and a departmental development plan has yet to be agreed. Teachers have undertaken only limited staff development. At the time of the inspection, two of the five mathematics teachers were on temporary contracts and there have been a significant number of changes of teachers for several classes. One Year 7 group, for example, has had five different teachers since September. This is affecting the continuity and progress for the boys in this class. Learning resources to support the work of the department are generally satisfactory. However, there is poor access to information and communications technology resources. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, although some rooms become cramped when used by large classes – restricting opportunities for practical work. A tiered lecture room is also in use and this does not allow easy access to some boys if they require support.

## SCIENCE

109. Boys enter the school with attainment that is well above average for their age. In 2000, the boys' results in national tests for 14 year olds were well above the national average for all schools. These results were in line with other grammar schools, and showed improvement at all levels compared with 1999. Boys performed better in these tests than in their English tests but not as well as in their mathematics tests. In the 2000 GCSE examinations the proportion of boys achieving grades A\*-C was above the national average in biology and chemistry but below in physics compared with all boys taking separate science examinations. Compared with boys taking all science examinations nationally, the proportion of boys gaining grades A\*-C was well above the national average in all subjects. Results over the past four years have been consistently high in all of the sciences with the exception in the 2000 physics results, which dipped sharply. Students studying biology, chemistry and physics post-16 achieve results that are well above the national average compared with all schools. Results in biology and chemistry are in line with those of similar schools whilst those in physics are above. Results in 2000 in physics and chemistry improved compared with 1999.

110. Inspection evidence shows that, by the age 14, boys' attainment is well above average. Their development of knowledge and understanding of physics, chemistry and biology is good. For example, in physics the more able boys have a very good knowledge of magnetic fields, how they can be plotted and in which direction they act. In biology, average attaining boys understand how predators adapt to their environment in order to make them more ecologically efficient. In chemistry, lower attaining boys successfully test acids and alkalis with universal indicator to measure their pH. They then classify their results in terms of the strength of the acid or alkali. Practical and investigative skills are improving across this age range as a result of well-managed practical lessons. In Years 10 and 11 lessons, observation and work scrutiny confirm that attainment is also well above average for their age. Boys have an improving knowledge and understanding of scientific theories and concepts in all the science attainment targets. In chemistry, higher attaining boys are able to relate the position of metals in the periodic table with their reactivity. They explain this reactivity well in terms of the metal's electronic configuration. In biology, average attaining boys know how bacteria are used in the production of cheese and yeast in bread and alcohol production. Lower attaining boys in physics have a very good understanding of the nature of sound waves and the application of ultra-sound to depth measurement at sea. Scientific enquiry skills are being well developed.

111. In the sixth form, students' attainment is also well above average compared with course requirements. In chemistry, students accurately titrate a weak acid against a strong alkali and use the results to calculate the acid's relative molecular mass. In physics, students have a very good understanding of resistivity. They are able to use Ohm's Law to calculate the resistance of a graphite-coated paper strip. In biology, students can define the base metabolic rate and use appropriate formula to calculate the body's average energy requirement during exercise. Problem-solving and experimental skills are well developed.

112. Standards of work observed during the inspection were well above average overall. In Years 7, 8 and 9, boys' achievement over time is satisfactory. They have good literacy and numerical skills and this aids their learning. As a result of teaching that is predominantly good they learn well and make satisfactory progress, considering their starting point. Progress is satisfactory in biology and chemistry. However, in lessons observed, boys'

achievement and progress are satisfactory in all the sciences. This is due in part to lower attaining boys' now accessing a science curriculum that is more appropriate to their abilities. In Years 12 and 13, students' achievement in all three sciences is satisfactory. They maintain the high standards seen in earlier years as a result of predominantly good teaching.

113. Boys' and students' attitudes are invariably good. They are well behaved in class. The positive relationships that have been established between boys and teachers help support the learning process. Collaborative work is good and boys work sensibly during practical work.

114. Teaching is good overall. It was good in just over half the lessons observed. About a quarter of lessons observed were satisfactory. One lesson observed was unsatisfactory, and the rest were very good. Amongst the strengths of teaching were the good management of boys and the positive relationships in the classroom. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject specialism were very good, particularly in Years 12 and 13. Lesson planning is good, with most lessons clearly stating learning objectives and checking outcomes. The quality of ongoing assessment is good and this is used effectively to track boys' performance. The system of self-assessment in Year 9 works very well in promoting motivation and raising standards. Control and discipline are firmly established. However, some boys experience only a limited range of learning opportunities, which restricts their independent learning. Some lessons lack pace and are rather dull and uninspiring. Day to day assessments for the younger boys do not give them an idea of the National Curriculum level at which they are working or show them how to improve.

115. There is no overall head of science. However, the management of biology, chemistry and physics is satisfactory and shows many good features. The departments have developed schemes of work, which deliver the science curriculum. There is good teamwork within the departments; they function well on a day-to-day basis, with the technicians working well to ensure their smooth running. Health and safety requirements are met and the departments have collaborated well to produce an effective system of assessment. However, there is no rigorous observation and evaluation of teaching in order to share good practice, and day-to-day marking is not monitored to ensure that departmental standards of marking are adhered to. There is no overall subject development plan incorporating issues common to all three departments. Some inefficiency arises when subject heads duplicate work and policies common to all three subjects. A lack of co-ordination of the delivery of the science curriculum results in some resources being used inefficiently. However, overall, the departments make a valuable contribution to the education of the boys and students. In order to further improve standards the departments need to observe and evaluate teaching in order to improve it where it is only at present only satisfactory.

## **ART**

116. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, the attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations. In 2000, all boys in Year 11 gained GCSE examination passes at grades A\*-C, which was well above the national average and above the results for similar schools. Twenty-eight per cent of these passes were at grade A\*, which is higher than

average. This continues the good results of 1999 and is better than the results of 1998. All boys who entered for A-Level in 2000 gained passes at grades A-B, well above the national average and the average for similar schools. This is an improvement on recent years. Results at both GCSE and A-Level are among the best in the school.

117. By the end of Key Stage 3, boys achieve standards which are broadly average. At the end of Year 9, all boys are able to employ a range of drawing techniques and devices, for example scaling up drawings and using the rules of perspective. They work from direct observation and use source material from books, magazines and the internet. Research is carried out as part of homework activity. The results are used to produce work that is clearly influenced by boys' knowledge of the work of artists and designers. Higher attaining boys show a strong awareness of composition, an ability to produce accurate and detailed drawing, and confidence in the use of colour. Lower attaining boys are less confident in their representation of two-dimensional images and their sense of design and composition. Boys use information and communication technology for research purposes and understand how manually prepared images can be enhanced by the use of technology. For example, boys in Year 9 prepared compact disc cover designs for scanning into the computer so that text could be added. Three-dimensional totem poles are constructed competently. However, achievement by the end of Key Stage 3 is adversely affected by an allocation of curriculum time for art in Year 9 which is well below national recommendations. Some boys in Year 9 will not have had an art lesson since the end of Year 8 by the time they have to make choices for Year 10. By the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of boys is above national expectations for similar schools. Boys develop individual outcomes from areas of personal interest. A confident use of pencil and pencil-crayon results in refined and mature drawings which display technical virtuosity. Wet and dry colour materials are used competently, often producing striking large-scale images. Examples of the creative use of information communication technology in GCSE coursework are evident in well-presented postage stamp designs. In Key Stages 3 and 4, sketchbooks are used well as a component of a constructive process of research, experimentation and planning, although few contain the personal notes, jottings and collected items which transform them into lively, individual visual diaries.

118. By the end of the sixth form, boys use refined and mature techniques to produce complex compositional arrangements which demonstrate a rich use of colour and surface treatment. Their investigations into the work of artists and designers enable them to engage in articulate discussion about the techniques and subject matter which clearly influence their own pieces of work.

119. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, good in Key Stage 4 and very good in the sixth form. In Key Stage 3, a non-specialist teacher is supported by the head of department in the preparation of teaching materials. However, the non-specialist teacher's subject knowledge is not always taken into account when planning lessons, resulting in a lack of confidence. The qualified art teacher, who is head of department, has the knowledge and experience to teach a range of skills covering two-dimensional and three-dimensional work and the use of information communication technology in art. The art specialist's very good subject knowledge offers the boys a thorough insight into the world of art and design and a good contextual background to their practical work. Schemes of work are well-structured so that pupils develop sound working processes and wide subject knowledge. However, opportunities for work in three dimensions are very limited and constrictions of working and storage space and lack of technician support make it more difficult to increase provision for this area of work. Classes are well-managed, especially those in Years 7 and 8, where large

groups of boys are taught in the restricted space available in the art room. Clear expectations of behaviour, promote a good working atmosphere in the department and boys respond by maintaining concentration and becoming involved in their work. In Key Stages 3 and 4, boys are not always given the opportunity to involve themselves actively in discussion. Although the pace of lessons is good, encouraging pupils to cover a lot of material, teaching strategies seldom create a group dynamic which encourages individual input and shared discussion. However, in Year 10, the GCSE art group is engaged in individual experimentation and boys show a lively interest in each other's work. In the sixth form, teaching challenges boys both in the range of artistic styles covered and in the development of skills. There are currently very few opportunities for pupils to visit local or national galleries or to work with artists, in order to broaden their vision of art and to expand their cultural boundaries. However, a departmental visit to London is planned for later in the year.

120. The department has its own assessment system which is linked to National Curriculum criteria. On-going monitoring of pupils' work is carried out regularly in lessons and has a significant impact on learning in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Resources in the department are limited and often depend on the use of the teacher's own materials. There is very little space for sixth form art students to work independently in study periods. The head of department manages the art department well but has little opportunity, within the school's management structure and systems, for contact with other departmental managers or for planned professional development. The creation and development of an art department website is an innovative and valuable resource which enables the school to promote the quality of its art work and which will provide an excellent resource for pupils' independent learning.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

121. In teachers' assessments, the attainment of 14 year-olds is below national expectations. The evidence of the inspection shows that although these assessments are below those made in other subjects, they give an accurate picture of the boys' attainment because the boys come to the school having had limited experience of design and technology in their primary and preparatory schools.

122. Between 11 and 14 years boys have minimal and fragmented design and technology curriculum time. This impedes the development of high order thinking, and organisational and problem solving skills, and holds back boys' progress. At 16 years, boys' standards are good. GCSE examination results at A\*-C indicate the high levels of ability of boys and the results of the limited number of boys who pursue GCSE are well above the national average.

123. Evidence of pupils' work observed shows that standards vary in both practice and theory. The standard of practical work is good. Pupils can work within the design process but are weaker in research skills. In practical work, they use modelling to develop their design ideas ready for the prototype production. They make good use of these interim processes to modify their design to meet its specification, but there is limited use of sequenced production plans. Skills tasks are strong and work in developing specific skills in

using tools and equipment provides positive guidance to pupils. This is good support because their time in design and technology is so short. In Years 7 and 8, design work often lacks detail and boys find it difficult to annotate their working drawings and make them accurate, which diminishes the success of the final outcome.

124. During Years 10 and 11, boys benefit from the use of the examination board's marking criteria and specialist in-house design-drawing manuals to develop the skills that presented problems in lower school. The relevant and very detailed, and often immediate, feedback from the teacher raises the quality of the design portfolios and good practical skills become more refined. Boys' attainment in design and technology matches the standards they achieve in their other GCSE examinations. At GCSE, the purposeful, independent activity of designing and making a product to solve a real problem gives them greater responsibility for their learning. For example, a Year 11 pupil was able to develop expert use of the wood lathe in designing a piece of furniture to match the traditional furniture in his home, with the needs of the client, his mother, helping to shape and modify the design. While achieving high standards, some boys do not complete their work. There are also limited opportunities for boys to develop research techniques or acquire knowledge about the process of commercial and industrial manufacturing. A major constraint that stops pupils reaching A\* grades is the lack of appropriate computer aided design techniques.

125. There is no sixth form course offered in design and technology to build on the strengthening picture at Year 11.

126. Overall teaching is good; in half of lessons it is good and in the other half it is very good. Teaching is rigorous and challenging and reflects the teacher's commitment to high standards. Very useful feedback is used by the boys to modify their designs, although comments in red pen can detract from the design drawings. Teacher's planning is matched to the National Curriculum by use of nationally recognised units of work. These also help to focus the learning on the development of independent thinking and problem solving skills. Lessons have a good pace, and, because time for the subject is limited, homework plays a major part in design development. Homework is valued and used regularly to start lessons and encourage individual boys to set targets for the lesson. Home use of computers is having a good impact on presentation.

127. Assessment of work is rigorous. Boys understand how and why their designs are successful, and are clear about the process of making and modifying. Contribution to this process is exciting; for example in Year 8, all pupils spend time looking at and commenting on each other's design, so sharing ideas and techniques. Assessment is accurate, but the recording of that assessment is disorganised and therefore lacks immediate value as a recording process. High standards of discipline, study and enjoyment are a clear expectation in design and technology and the boys rise to meet these challenges.

128. Management of the department is very good, given the constraints imposed by the timetable and the fact that this is a single teacher department. Departmental documentation does not reflect school policies, and there is no line manager or job description for the head of department role. Lack of time is a real issue for the department because both continuity and progress suffer. For example, in Year 9, boys have only ten weeks of design and technology

in order to prepare for choices at GCSE. Often this means the choice is made before the subject is fully experienced. Limited time also restricts the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that are a fundamental part of the National Curriculum. More time has been provided in Year 7 and this has led to improvement in foundation skills in design and technology.

129. The breadth of techniques taught and the range of materials used are constrained by the single teacher department. For example, there are boys in Year 10 with aspirations to textile and fashion design, but this area is not included in the scheme of work because there is no specialist teacher. The lack of computer aided design and wider computer use is possible only for those boys with computers at home; availability of computers for design and technology in school is unsatisfactory. Literacy skills are developed well; the use of specialist terminology is carefully planned and opportunities to discuss, plan and explain designs, for example, are well exploited. Boys' numeracy skills develop well through the range of measuring and calculating tasks associated with designing, scale drawing and practical tasks in the subject.

130. The new accommodation is having an impact on learning because it is a specialist design area, encouraging professional work. Boys' work on display, including photographs, is used well in teaching to inspire and challenge boys to reach the standards of work expected.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

131. Standards are very high at all stages compared with national averages. The highest attaining boys at GCSE and A-Level exceed standards for pupils in similar schools. However, some students do not fulfil potential shown at GCSE when they come to take A-Level examinations.

132. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment exceeds national expectations overall. By the age of sixteen, attainment is outstanding when compared with the national averages and is broadly in line with the average for selective schools. The highest attainers scored twenty-five per cent more A\* grades than pupils in similar schools in 2000, and boys add better value between the ages of fourteen and sixteen than in fifty per cent of schools nationally. Boys performed better in geography in 2000 than in most of their other subjects. At A-Level in 2000 the performance was broadly average, though the percentage obtaining grade A matched that for similar schools. Standards have dropped since 1999. In 2000, students performed less well in geography than in most other subjects at A-Level.

133. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of work are well above average; inspection evidence shows that boys have very good knowledge. For example, boys learn about cattle ranching in monsoon Australia and the management of a harsh environment to improve farming productivity. They have a comprehensive understanding of the significant issues associated with the Kobe earthquake, and open cast mining, and this helps them to attain the



higher levels of the National Curriculum. Year 7 boys make a sound start to developing field-work skills but do not experience this area study in Years 8 and 9. Teachers recognise that providing more practical geography and field work would contribute to the improvement of coursework marks at GCSE and ultimately would help more boys attain the highest grades at GCSE.

134. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are well above average. Teachers correctly recognise that the raising of standards of course work for GCSE is a continuing target for improving the attainment of boys of average and below average prior attainment (for this school). In class, boys achieve very well when studying the decay of old, heavy industry and the means of redevelopment, using the Ruhr area of Germany as a case study.

135. By the end of sixth form, students meet the requirements of the examination board. Teachers are correct to consider why a number of boys of high prior attainment attained only average grades and four candidates left the school before the end of Year 12.

136. Teaching is good overall; in about one lesson in five it is very good. Teaching is better in the examination classes than before the age of fourteen, where it occasionally slips to unsatisfactory when the pace of learning drops, or not enough is expected of the boys. Seven per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory.

137. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they give clear explanations so that boys absorb substantial amounts of factual information and acquire the technical terminology associated with the subject. Learning objectives for lessons are clear and shared with boys, so that they know what is expected of them and what they are intended to learn. The variety of teaching techniques is narrow; teachers predominantly talk and explain the details of the subject, and provide insufficient opportunities for boys to find out for themselves or to engage in independent learning. Nevertheless, the pace of lessons is brisk, and the teaching materials are challenging. Boys are managed well and the sharp focus on learning and high expectations of the boys' behaviour are effective in promoting achievement. The boys respond with characteristic intellectual energy, working mostly at their own level and pace in unusual silence. The generally very good attitudes and behaviour of the boys in the classroom and the good relationships between teachers and pupils contribute significantly to good learning.

138. The teaching of cross-curricular skills is of mixed success, partly because they are unplanned. Teachers do not teach parts of the course through the use of computers and are in breach of their statutory obligation to do so. Most boys have computers at home and they develop high levels of skill which they display in their homework and course work, for example, in researching the Kobe earthquake, or in using desktop publishing to create the front page of a newspaper reporting the treatment of aborigines in Australia. Boys who do not own computers are at a disadvantage. However, boys use their ability with numbers skilfully to gain good insights to geography. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson, boys converted two complex matrices of information about the height of land in relation to the amounts of rainfall received into a graph which illustrated the principles of relief rainfall. Similarly, in another very good AS-Level lesson on settlement hierarchies, students drew

complex graphs to show the theoretical growth of cities in the USA. against their actual growth, were able to classify the characteristics of the different curves and begin to construct theories about the development of cities. Boys are literate but, especially before the age of fourteen, do not gain enough practice in writing in a range of styles or in using their high levels of knowledge and understanding to solve problems.

139. Teachers are practised in marking books, and they use informal assessment well in classrooms. They intervene well to correct common errors and to reinforce good learning. However, teachers do not record and use details of boys' performance on entry to the school to measure the achievement of boys or to set them targets for improvement. Good analysis of previous examination results of pupils, classes and teachers allows planning for improvement. For example, the analysis revealed the need to improve course work at GCSE for some lower attainers and this is being carried out. Teachers are inexperienced in measuring the Attainment Levels of the National Curriculum but are developing this skill by accumulating a folder of examples of assessed work against which to measure others.

140. The boys make good progress between the ages of eleven and fourteen, and between sixteen and eighteen. They make very good progress between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, leading up to GCSE examinations.

141. Teachers successfully create a strong ethos for learning because pupils work in rooms displaying the artefacts of the subject. Boys' work is well displayed and success is celebrated. The department is well led and managed but the head of department carries the dual role of head of year along with a heavy teaching load. This creates role conflict. The three teachers form a good team, but they do not teach close to each other; this makes problems of communication and for the deployment of resources. There are insufficient books in any year at Key Stage 3 for boys to work individually. There are no modern texts for Year 9 and the books used to teach the geography of Australia are out of date and in very poor condition. The department has access to a satellite weather station but has no computers to support learning within the subject. Schemes of work are developing well and are beginning to plan styles of learning. The department is forming a productive relationship with the Local Education Authority's adviser.

142. The department is responding positively and well to the rapidly changing circumstances of the school and is adapting constructively to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **HISTORY**

143. In the teachers' assessments at age 14, the attainment of boys was well above national averages. Work seen during the inspection supports this result. At GCSE in 2000, 97 per cent of candidates achieved A\*- C grades, which was well above the national average and above average for selective schools. Results were better than in the two previous years. Boys performed better in history than in most other subjects in the school. There were 17 entries at A-Level; 15 candidates passed with nine achieving A or B grades. This was a higher result than the average for selective schools. In 1999 the result was higher when all 22 entrants passed and 16 out of 22 achieved A or B grades.

144. At age 14, standards of work are well above those expected nationally. Boys recall previous work well. They quickly fit new knowledge into an historical context. They evaluate historical sources well and present information in a variety of diagrams, time lines and maps as well as in extended writing. Literacy skills are good overall and sometimes very good. They are quick to perceive causes and results such as the reasons for Chamberlain's Munich Agreement, and the consequences of it. Their sense of sequence is highly developed. Boys find links between political, economic and military factors and their relative importance, for example, in the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Many show a healthy spirit of enquiry about things historical. At age 16, boys' attainment is very good. They are quick to express themselves with historical accuracy on paper. Some boys would do better to write in shorter sentences so that the points they are making would be clearer and have greater impact. Boys have a good grasp of complicated, mature topics, for example, the challenges from left and right to the Weimar constitution in the early 1920s, or why the French failed to defeat the Vietminh immediately after World War II. Boys are capable of evaluating contradictory sources well. The best of the course work which is undertaken by some classes is impressive. In all year groups, further refinement of the level of challenge made to gifted boys, when they are identified, needs to be considered by the department. Standards in the sixth form are very good. Highly motivated sixth formers in both year groups have confidence in handling large quantities of material. There is good evidence of breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding. Students' understanding of political and ideological concepts is very good and their use of historical vocabulary is excellent.

145. Teaching is good overall and is a very great strength of the department. No lesson observed was less than good and half were very good. There is a tradition of very hard work in the department. Boys respond positively to high expectations of concentration and effort so the quality of learning is good. Teachers believe in the value of the subject for the young and their enthusiasm is infectious. They prepare and structure lessons well and as they are good communicators, learning is secure. Skilful questioning by teachers encourages boys to find answers for themselves. Encouragement is widely given and merits and history certificates are motivating for younger boys. The art of story telling is not forgotten but its greater use would increase the enjoyment of the subject. Opportunities are taken to link the past with present day national and international affairs and more could be found, especially for younger boys. Excellent attention is given to both historical and general vocabulary which has a direct impact on standards. Teachers are meticulous about spelling which is very good. The pace of lessons is brisk throughout and sometimes very fast. Even so, teachers listen attentively to comments and questions from the boys so many gain confidence and become more articulate. Boys in GCSE classes are taught examination techniques most thoroughly. Much practice, for example in the interpretation of sources, increases their confidence and ability. Boys also have practice in working out the relative importance of factors by prioritising, as in a Year 11 lesson on the introduction and failure of prohibition. Learning takes place in imaginative ways, too. For example, it is planned that a Year 7 class cook a dish of nettles and cheese to experience a villein household's meal. In the sixth form, teaching is authoritative and demands made on students are rigorous.

146. The management of the department is efficient and on-going. Schemes of work for the first three years are presently being up-dated in line with National Curriculum 2000 by the head of department and other departmental staff. Monitoring needs further development within the department: there is no line manager nor governor with special interest at present. Teachers are keen to use information and communication technology as a tool for history

when facilities are available. There is particular emphasis on and appreciation of religion as a vital factor in the lives of people in past centuries as, for example, in the study of medieval beliefs and attitudes. Boys' social and cultural development is assisted by studies of past societies very different from their own.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

147. The school does not have a tradition of a consistent information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum. The new head master has a passion for the subject and sees the value of information technology as a tool to improve learning. At present the curriculum has limitations because equipment, timetabling and limited teacher skills restrict the development of the subject

148. The result of teacher assessment at 14 years was above the national average but inspection evidence did not support this assessment. Work stored in user areas and retained as hard copy is below standards expected at this age. Some boys have computers at home but there is no recording of skills practised at home. Nor is work in school assessed to give pupils a secure picture of their progress.

149. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils use computer communication well. They work on research on the Internet. Many pupils can combine several programmes to produce posters and reports, such as the project researching their 'Dream Holiday', but this work relies heavily on teacher support. Boys can edit and copy information from the Internet as well as introducing their own text into documents, as seen in the display to celebrate St Ambrose on 7<sup>th</sup> December, but this work is done at home. They successfully import images from the Internet to illustrate their work. The recent introduction of e-mail gives all boys a good opportunity to practise this method of communication with friends or home. At present there is no scheme of work in place and therefore little opportunity for pupils to develop ideas and make things happen in other subjects. For example, pupils cannot control events or modify a sequence of instructions in design and technology. Limitations in using ICT to test predictions, explore, evaluate and develop models also restrict the extension of ICT skills.

150. At age 16, boys do not experience discrete ICT teaching and have limited experiences in other subjects. Standards of work are not measured by an external examination. Evidence of boys' work shows that most of it is completed at home, for example, the creative topic work in geography. There are two main curriculum areas where innovative teachers have planned to include appropriate ICT in their schemes of work. These are option subjects, which only affect a small proportion of boys. In art, good work is being trialled in the development of a web site to enhance art appreciation and celebrate the success of individual boys' work; this is having a positive impact on learning. In modern languages, the introduction of a language laboratory has opened up effective paired work and is beginning to have a positive influence on listening skills, although 'teething troubles' surround the use of the new equipment. Sixth form students have been trained into a support role in the languages department. This obviates the need for a technician at present while the network is at an early stage of development.

151. In the sixth form, students have a short module of ICT in their general studies course. This time is used satisfactorily for research, and some students make better use of it than others. Students undertake investigations such as researching possible activities during their gap year.

152. Teaching has been in an unusual situation, with no permanent teacher and a lack of planned schemes of work. This has been rectified by the appointment of a qualified ICT co-ordinator for January 2001. During the inspection, a temporary teacher was maintaining the subject. The teaching observed was satisfactory overall, with elements of good practice. Short-term planning was good and maintained boys' interest in computers. Behaviour and pupil management were effective because the teacher made expectations of standards of work and behaviour clear, and monitored boys' responses. Question and answer sessions were rigorous and probed the boys' understanding of techniques such as refining research. The boys are very dependent on the teacher's support and there were no help sheets to aid boys' confidence and encourage more independence in their work. Constant response to boys' queries during lessons delays progress and slows pace in some cases, preventing the consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson. In other subjects, teachers' skills are varied. The government-training programme is not fully embedded into the teachers' experience, although it is part of future planning.

153. Attitudes to ICT are good, as witnessed by the number of pupils attending the newly formed computer club. Behaviour is generally good despite the immaturity of some pupils who find it hard to concentrate on their work for prolonged periods. Personal development is sound because pupils are able to develop their basic skills and are beginning to use ICT to solve problems.

154. Plans to develop the subject and establish effective management are in the college development plan. Over the past month, the new computer suite has been installed but is not yet fully commissioned. Recent initiatives are having a clear impact on developing skills and raising interest but there are many issues that have restrained the development of ICT in the school. The absence of a co-ordinator and a scheme of work have impeded the development of the subject. There has been no mapping of ICT across the curriculum or any means by which opportunities for ICT within subjects can be monitored. Many departments are not fulfilling their statutory responsibility to teach appropriate elements of ICT. Nevertheless, since the beginning of this term, the vision for development has taken a central position. The administrative link to parents who are on line, using the National Grid for Learning grant, is in place and prepares the ground to strengthen links with families and improve boys' understanding of the most effective use of ICT.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

155. Standards in modern foreign languages are well above national standards and boys achieve well. The results of the teacher assessments for boys aged 14 were well above those reported nationally.

## **FRENCH**

156. GCSE results in 2000 were well above the national average and above the average for selective schools. The proportions of boys gaining A\*-C and A\* grades were higher than the national average and the average for similar schools. Contrary to the national trend, boys did significantly better in French than in many other subjects. A-Level, results were above the national average for A-E grades and in line with results for similar schools. The proportion of higher A/B grades was lower than the national average and the average for similar schools. Over the past three years, results have remained broadly similar.

157. The evidence of work and the lessons observed showed that, by the age of 14, boys attain standards that are well above national expectations with a third attaining very high standards. Higher attaining boys have a well-developed understanding of grammar and operate with confidence in past, present and future tenses. Lower attaining boys fully understand the perfect tense and use it effectively with support from the teacher. By the age of sixteen, standards are similarly high. Higher attainers use the imperfect tense when talking about weather forecasts and recall a wide range of vocabulary. Average attainers identify key points from a tape about booking into a hotel and write confidently about school life in the past tense. Students in the sixth form attain standards that are above national expectations. Those currently in their final year of study attain very high standards and have a very good grasp of grammar and structure, and fluent, sophisticated French. Their oral skills have developed extensively, partly because of a visit to France earlier in the year. Students in Year 12, who have not yet had the benefit of this experience, attain standards that are in line with national expectations.

## **GERMAN**

158. GCSE results were very high when compared with national averages. Just under a sixth of the cohort entered for the examination and almost half gained A\* grades. Boys did much better in German than they did in other subjects. A Level results were above national averages for all and for similar schools for A-E and the higher grades. Over the past three years, results have remained broadly similar.

159. Inspection evidence showed that, by the age of sixteen, all boys attain standards that are similarly high. They use past tenses fluently when writing about previous holidays and understand the teacher's fluent German. In the sixth form, they attain standards that are above national expectations. They express a variety of opinions and ideas about subjects such as drug and alcohol abuse.

160. Literacy skills are well developed in both languages. Boys are more confident in reading, writing and listening than in speaking, although they perform well in all four skills under examination conditions. They are beginning to use computers confidently in the classroom.

161. Boys behave very well in language lessons. Occasionally, they lack the maturity and independent learning skills to cope with unpredictable situations. This was seen in a Year 10 class, where boys who were getting used to operating the language laboratory could not cope without constantly calling for support from the teacher.

162. Teaching is good overall in both French and German. It is very good in German at Key Stage 4. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use the target language extensively. Lessons are well planned and teachers ensure full coverage of all four attainment targets, which enables boys to make good progress. Homework plays a significant role in consolidating the vocabulary and structures taught in class. Teachers mark very conscientiously and give excellent feedback, which encourages boys to attain their highest standards. Boys contribute well to the learning process, although too few opportunities are provided for them to take control of the learning for themselves, to work independently on activities that require dictionary work, for example, or to read for pleasure. Expectations are high at all three key stages, although at the start of the AS Level course teachers do not insist that students communicate sufficiently in French. This means that they do not have the opportunity to develop the highest speaking skills they are capable of until later in the course, rendering progress satisfactory in Year 12 and good in Year 13. This is not the case in German, where students make good progress throughout the key stage because teacher and students use German extensively.

163. French and German function as two independent departments, which means that the German teacher operates alone. As a result, practice across both languages is inconsistent and opportunities are lost for teachers to learn from one another. The head of German manages his subject well. The head of French gives clear direction to the members of his team. Teachers have a shared commitment to raising standards and to development in both languages. Monitoring of teaching and learning is at an early stage of development, although the French department is beginning a useful process of self-evaluation and there is regular discussion of teaching and learning in departmental meetings. Assessment is good, particularly in French, where teachers are beginning to use the National Curriculum levels to guide their work. This is not happening in German and means that, although boys work extensively in the target language in Key Stages 4 and 5, they operate mainly in English in Year 9. Accommodation is adequate but it is difficult for teachers to share and discuss their work since some teach at a distance from the main language area. There are too few dictionaries to support independent learning and very little reading for pleasure material. The language laboratory will be a useful resource once teachers have become fully confident with it, but they do not have enough software to be able to use it to full advantage. The satellite system is not working and there are no overhead projectors to enable teachers to broaden their teaching approaches. No foreign languages assistants have been employed by the school, although a French speaker is currently giving up her free time to help sixth formers to improve their oral work. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with French as the National Curriculum language and a choice of German or Latin in Key Stage 3. The current curriculum model makes it difficult for the highest attainers to continue with German or Latin to A Level.

## **LATIN**

164. GCSE results in Latin were lower than the results in either of the other two languages with a small proportion of the boys entered for the examination gaining A\* grades. Results in classical studies at A-Level were well below national averages with no higher grades.

165. Evidence from observation of lessons and analysis of work shows that boys' attainment by the age of 14 is in line with national expectations. Boys translate paragraphs confidently and recall a variety of previously learnt vocabulary and structures well. Most achieve

appropriate standards for their ability, although staffing difficulties in the past and some inappropriate teaching methods, particularly in Year 9, are resulting in underachievement for a significant number of boys. By the age of 16, boys attain standards that are in line with national expectations. Most have a sound knowledge base on which to build, and they use their well-developed learning skills effectively to enhance their performance.

166. Teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good but is satisfactory overall. In good lessons, teachers introduce the topics in an imaginative way which engages the boys' interest before moving on to the grammatical part of the lesson. In less successful lessons, methods used are analytical and uninspiring and do not meet the needs of the full spread of ability within the group. The subject is well managed and department minutes show appropriate discussion on issues such as consistency and teaching methodology.

## MUSIC

167. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations followed the trend of being considerably higher than the national average. The high standard of pupils' practical performance, as a result of private tuition or tuition by visiting instrumental teachers, contributes to these excellent results. A-Level results, with three entries, were below the national average. No formal assessments were undertaken at the end of Year 9.

168. Standards of attainment are currently unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3; good at Key Stage 4, and very good in the Sixth Form.

169. The National Curriculum is not being fully delivered in Years 7, 8 and 9, and boys are not acquiring the skills and experiences statutorily required for them to compose, perform and appraise music to an acceptable standard by the end of the key stage. Within lessons during the inspection, pupils showed a secure knowledge of the characteristics of orchestral instruments and a broad concept of the historical and musical features of the topics being covered this term. Year 9 boys, for example, had a good knowledge of the place of jazz in music. Structural analysis skills, when boys listen to music, are being well developed. Rhythmic work, often including complicated syncopated patterns, and performed through clapping exercises, is well co-ordinated. Boys' standards of achievement within individual lessons are satisfactory, but due to the way in which the curriculum is being delivered, standards of attainment over the key stage are unsatisfactory. For example, Year 7 boys did not know the difference between a crotchet and a quaver, and could not recognise a crotchet rest. The department has very few classroom instruments, and very few working keyboards with which boys can do group work and develop the skills required by the attainment targets. There is no computer or appropriate software available to extend the more able and talented boys with separate tasks in practical work. During the course of the inspection, very little practical music making was observed in the classroom at this key stage; theory and history dominated.

170. Boys in Years 10 and 11 have good standards of practical performance, being able to play on guitars, the piano or orchestral instruments with expertise and poise. These standards were demonstrated effectively within a lesson in which Year 11 boys were preparing to



record their performances. Aural skills are being steadily developed across the two years. Standards of practical keyboard improvisation and the boys' knowledge of harmonic devices are good. Most can fluently play a sequence of major and minor chords, adding a melody on top and confidently using passing and auxiliary notes.

171. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are very good. The three students in Year 13 have advanced standards of practical musicianship. Two of them were absent on interview during the inspection, but the one student present showed excellent aural skills, perceptive analytical score reading, and a very thorough knowledge of form and harmony. He is on target to gain very good end of course results.

172. Boys have very good attitudes to music at Key Stages 3 and 4, and excellent attitudes in the sixth form. They are quiet and attentive, and very respectful during lessons. Concentration is absolute, despite the fact that most lessons are totally teacher-led. Boys, unusually, do not react physically to jazz played to them, though they become more animated on the rare occasions they do practical rhythm work. Generally, there was no atmosphere of enjoyment in lessons observed during the inspection at any key stage. At Key Stage 4, the boys help and encourage each other in practical work, and have realistic expectations of their own ability. The sixth form student demonstrated considerable maturity and clearly can be trusted to research independently and practise with success. He contributes positively to the department by often taking choir practices.

173. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, is good at Key Stage 4 and is very good in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, lessons are tightly controlled, and a fast pace of development is maintained. Teaching methods used at Key Stage 3 are poor and inappropriate for delivery of the National Curriculum. Expectations are low, there is no variety of teaching styles, and activity is limited within lessons. Theory is not related to practice, and there are many missed opportunities for teaching musical literacy and musical skills in an interesting way. Carefully prepared, appropriate worksheets are not provided, resulting in wasted time copying from the board, or writing down dictated comments. Lessons are not brought to a conclusion through which there might be a sharing of progress made. There is no reference to National Curriculum targets in lessons at Key Stage 3, and the boys have no idea at what level they are working or what they have to do to improve their individual standards. The lack of challenge was exemplified by a group of boys in year 10 who successfully completed their group task in two minutes and then wasted the next eighteen minutes allocated to them. What they learned, they learned well, but they were not sufficiently challenged and could have achieved more. Provision is not made to extend the work of the more able boys, particularly at Key Stage 4. The teaching in the sixth form is rigorous and challenging. The teacher makes good use of his specialist knowledge and this has a positive impact on boys' attitudes and achievement.

174. At present, the music department is directed by a teacher on a temporary appointment. There is also a part-time specialist teacher who teaches on a day not covered by the inspection. There are no comprehensive schemes of work relating to the National Curriculum, or to course specifications. The department is under-resourced, having almost no classroom instruments, too few keyboards and too few power points through which technology might operate in the teaching room. There are no computers for creating and storing composition work, or for extending the many very able musical boys in the school. The accommodation is an inappropriate working space for practical group work. Although the music suite is a very pleasant area, it is inappropriate for group work as the practice

rooms are down the corridor, making supervision difficult. The suite is under used because it is frequently locked up during non-teaching times. There was no evidence of boys using the area for their own, independent music making before or after school. The combination of poor instrument and technology resources, an out-dated style of accommodation, and an inappropriate curriculum, contributes to poor delivery of the National Curriculum. Boys are unaware of the levels of attainment they have to gain, even though levels for music were introduced nationally at the beginning of this term, and will inform the end of Key Stage 3 assessments which will have to be made. There are no policy statements on assessment procedures, or on the department's contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, or on the provision for boys of differing ability. There are no realistic short or long term, costed development plans for the subject. The school choir has a deserved reputation in the community, though only eleven trebles from what has historically been a full, four-part, accomplished choir, turned up for rehearsals during the week of the inspection, despite an imminent carol concert. An orchestra and a band perform on a regular basis, although they were not performing during the inspection week.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

175. In the most recent teacher assessments of boys at the age of 14, a much higher proportion than is found nationally achieved the expected standards and a far greater proportion achieved higher standards. Around 10 per cent of boys achieved exceptional performance. These results match the findings of the inspection.

176. By the age of 14 boys attain standards that are well above average and this represents good progress and achievement compared to their above average standards when they join the school. By the end of Year 9, boys demonstrate very good rugby skills, even when under pressure in a game, and they use them effectively within games. Year 9 boys use attack tactics such as the 'switch' and the 'loop' effectively both in practice and in a game. Rugby is a major strength throughout the school. Boys play basketball to an above average standard. They have good knowledge of the rules and basic strategies. They can evaluate performance in response to teachers' questions but are less confident in talking to each other about performance. Boys know how to warm up and cool down but do not often take responsibility for this part of the lesson.

177. By the age of 16, boys attain well above average standards. They make good progress and achieve well in relation to their potential. By the end of Year 11 boys continue to play rugby to a very high standard, and have a good knowledge and understanding of techniques. They plan and use advanced tactics and strategies. Boys play basketball to a good standard, and understand the principles of weight training. They can explain the benefits of exercise and plan their own individual exercise programmes. They use weights machines and training equipment safely.

178. Boys across all years use the language of the subject well in response to teachers' questions. In Years 10 to 13, boys develop very good levels of performance, but only a small number become confident in coaching, officiating and evaluating performances. This is because there are few opportunities for boys to practise these activities.

179. Boys' very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons contribute to the good progress they make. Around 50 per cent of boys take part in the very good range of extra-curricular activities. Consequently, many achieve very high standards and represent the school at county level, and sometimes national level, in a range of sports which include rugby, athletics, swimming and tennis.

180. The quality of the teaching and of boys' learning is good overall. In almost one half of lessons in Years 7 to 9, the teaching is very good; in Years 10 and 11 it is very good or excellent in one third of the lessons.

181. Teachers' very good knowledge of activities such as rugby help them to plan challenging activities, ask probing questions and ensure that boys develop a very good knowledge of techniques and strategies. However, teachers do not always plan to help boys to improve a broader range of skills such as coaching and officiating, particularly in Years 10 to 13. Consequently boys are less well prepared than they could be to take on the broad range of roles in the world of sport. Boys respond well to teachers' high expectations of them, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. As a result, they work hard physically and they improve their fitness, their performance in games, and their knowledge of rules, techniques and strategies.

182. Teachers give clear demonstrations and explanations of skills and strategies. Lessons move at a good pace and teachers use a good variety of approaches. Consequently most boys are well motivated and enjoy lessons. In an excellent Year 11 rugby lesson, boys were encouraged to lead their own warm up and then were led by the teacher through a series of challenging rugby drills at a furious pace. Throughout the lesson, the teacher asked probing questions which required the boys to work out which techniques to use in various situations and which strategies to adopt. In some less challenging lessons, teachers answer their own questions too often and do not give boys enough opportunity to work out solutions to problems, for example, in planning attack and defence strategies for themselves.

183. Good feedback to the boys on how well they perform helps them to improve their performance in games. Teachers' planning is good. They identify clear targets for lessons and share them with the boys. They refer to the targets throughout lessons and review them at the end. There are, however, too few occasions when boys are given specific targets to match their individual needs. Teachers know the boys' individual needs related to physical and medical difficulties and in some lessons teachers adapt tasks and equipment accordingly. However, there are no systems in place to ensure that boys unable to take a full active part in lessons have an alternative programme that meets their needs.

184. Although boys have the opportunity to use the correct language of the subject in response to teachers' questions, there is little use of display or other visual resources to help boys to learn the specific technical language of the subject.

185. The leadership of the subject is very good. The director of studies sets a very good example in the quality of his teaching and his commitment to high standards. He has a very clear view of how the subject should develop and improve within the school. The management of the subject is good. A good range of policies underpin the work of the department and schemes of work based on the National Curriculum guide the teaching. However, there is no formal monitoring and support of teaching. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is planned sensibly to enable the boys to follow activities over

sufficient length of time to sustain good progress. The boys benefit from the involvement of a good number of highly committed, well qualified and experienced teachers from both within the department and beyond who contribute to the curricular and extra-curricular programme.

186. The accommodation provided for physical education is unsatisfactory overall, but the school makes very good use of the facilities available. Although the playing fields are extensive and well used, the indoor accommodation is less extensive and of poorer quality. The indoor spaces are small for the size of classes and this restricts the opportunities to develop advanced strategies in games such as basketball, volleyball and badminton. The swimming pool has inadequate changing facilities and no toilet facilities. The building is in a poor state and in need of refurbishment.

## **BUSINESS EDUCATION**

187. Business Studies is introduced at sixth form level. Students have no background in this area of work. Once an understanding of the subject is established, students make good progress. Results at A-Level have fluctuated over the last three years and, in 2000, A/B grades were below national average but A/E grades were in line, with 93 per cent of boys gaining success.

188. Students develop a good range of skills, including a sound working knowledge of marketing, accounts and finance, and aspects of people and operations management. They have effective opportunities to debate external influences such as inflation. Good case studies and lively discussion, especially in Year 13, fuel students' knowledge. All students make their own effective notes and consolidate learning through regular weekly tests that assess and target improvement needed. The lack of information and communications technology (ICT) limits students' opportunity for independent learning. Links with industry are not established and therefore there is little opportunity for pupils to examine theoretical business issues in a real setting.

189. The quality of teaching is sound at lower sixth and good at upper sixth. The facilitation of learning which is successful in Year 13 is underdeveloped in Year 12, where there are fewer opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Effective course materials are well prepared and the use of reliable commercial resources, including books and videos, plus the availability of broadsheet newspapers in the library, helps to expand students' views and understanding. Management and behaviour are enhanced by the style of room layout, which encourages debate, thereby improving the learning environment. Clear teacher assessment by test tracks the development of each student's weekly progress. Well-planned tests are used regularly to monitor students' knowledge and ability to structure answers to questions, enabling the teacher to estimate progress accurately. As there is no base line on entry to lower sixth business studies, it is difficult to measure the value-added influence of the course.

190. Management of a one-person department has difficulties. Since the start of term, a major improvement for the department has been securing a dedicated room for teaching. However, the limitations of the room are a lack of computers to enable technology to be an active part of learning, and inadequate storage and access to audio visual aid equipment to

give diversity to teaching. The department handbook gives consideration to many policies such as literacy, but it lacks several policy statements, a department philosophy and a development plan framework, including costing and success criteria, that encapsulates whole school policies.

## **ECONOMICS**

191. The subject is taught only at A-Level. Results are below those for boys in all schools and well below those for all pupils in similar schools. Few boys go on to read economics at university and students choose the subject as subsidiary to their main interests. Compared with attainment in other subjects, although those of high prior attainment tend to do well, attainment overall in economics at A-Level is below average.

192. Teaching at AS Level is very good. The boys reach high standards in their learning, for example, when they use their knowledge to perform a cost benefit analysis on the Merry Hill Shopping Centre in preparation for a similar study on Manchester Airport. In Year 13, in a discussion on whether or not to join the Euro, the highest attaining students explained their point of view fluently and accurately. However, some boys were unsure of their understanding of the good evidence provided and used arguments against joining which were not related to economics. Students' attitudes are good and they respond well to opportunities for research and dialogue.

193. The new subject handbook provides a good basis for development in that it is well structured and capable of being expanded as the school passes through redevelopment. The department does not yet use baseline assessment and target setting to identify and support the attainment and progress of individual students.

## **POLITICS**

194. Politics is a strong and lively department in the sixth form. It is well organised. Three candidates entered for A-Level in 2000. One achieved an A grade; all passed. Over the last 3 years there have been 16 entrants. All have passed and 9 have achieved A or B grades. In Year 13, there are 5 students. In year 12, 16 students are taking the new AS Level and many of them are likely to go on to the full A-Level. The syllabus is mature and wide ranging. Students are highly motivated and are able to analyse documents critically, relating them to prevailing attitudes or ideologies. Teaching is authoritative. Both teachers of the subject listen well to students' questions and to their points of view, as well as to the presentations they make in class. Students listen well to each other, which provides good opportunities to develop oral skills. Many students do speak confidently and are articulate, and their use of general and specialist vocabulary is very good. Their knowledge of very recent political history is detailed and many students are able to think quickly of examples to support points they make. Ambitious and successful visits have been made to Washington, USA and Strasbourg. A visit to Brussels is planned.