

INSPECTION REPORT

WILLIAM HOWARD SCHOOL

Brampton, near Carlisle

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112439

Headteacher: Mr R T Alston

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton
4492

Dates of inspection: 6 – 9 November 2000

Inspection number: 224046

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Rimmer
Date of previous inspection:	May 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

William Howard School is a mixed 11 to 18 comprehensive school in the market town of Brampton, ten miles east of Carlisle. It draws pupils from a large area of rural Northeast Cumbria as well as from the more built up areas on the edge of Carlisle. There are over 1300 pupils on roll, an increase of more than 300 since the time of last inspection. The main school is consistently over subscribed. The growing sixth form now has 225 students, the large majority of whom are studying for two or more A and AS Levels. A lower than average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school's intake at age eleven covers the full range of attainment and is overall close to but just above the national average. Less than one per cent of pupils is of an ethnic minority, and only six are at a relatively early stage of learning English. Two hundred and twenty four pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, including seventy-seven at the higher stages (Stages 3 to 5) of the special needs code of practice. Their needs in the main concern specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural needs. The staying-on rate into the sixth form is high, and large numbers go on to higher education each year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

William Howard is a very successful school in most respects. Well above average proportions of pupils achieve the nationally expected levels of attainment at the end of each key stage and in the sixth form. The school provides good value for the money it receives. Staff, parents and pupils feel that its main strengths are the good quality of the teaching, the effectiveness of the leadership, the high expectations of all its pupils, and the very good quality social and learning facilities the school provides.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils achieve high standards of attainment overall, by the end of each key stage and in the sixth form.
- Teachers' high expectations lead to effective learning in almost all subjects.
- The school's leadership is very effective in maintaining and raising standards, since its primary focus is on the continual improvement of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Pupils are well provided for, both academically and socially.
- Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well catered for.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Whilst being close to the national average, standards of attainment in English are not always high enough, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching and learning, particularly at Key Stage 3, especially in modern foreign languages.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1995. It has since made good progress in improving almost all the aspects identified then as areas of relative weakness. It has also made further good improvements in areas not then designated as weak. For example, the better than national average rise in overall GCSE results, the improvements in learning support and the social provision for pupils, and especially in the first rate facilities for teaching and learning in many areas of the school.

The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 has improved, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, there is still some weak teaching at this key stage, especially in modern foreign languages. The quality of teaching and learning is evaluated much more systematically than it used to be, including its impact on pupils' achievements. Standards of information technology capability across the curriculum are much improved, reflecting the much better access to modern ICT equipment and the much enhanced staff expertise. Provision for religious education is also much improved, except in the sixth form where the subject is still not offered in any systematic way. Pupils still do not experience a daily act of collective worship, although some of the assemblies seen during the inspection contained moments of very moving spirituality.

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	A
A-Levels/AS-Levels	A	A	A	

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

From a starting point of close to the national average when they enter the school, pupils achieve standards of attainment that are well above the national average in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE and A-Level examinations.

Well above average proportions of pupils achieve the expected National Curriculum level (Level 5) in all three of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. The trend in the school's average national test scores over the last four years is an increase that is broadly in line with the national trend, but consistently about two terms ahead of pupils elsewhere. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is also well above the national average when measured against similar schools in mathematics and science, though not in English.

When pupils reach the end of Key Stage 4, at age 16, they achieve well above average GCSE points scores overall. The trend in overall total GCSE points scores is above the national trend. Results at William Howard are improving year-on-year faster than they are in schools nationally. The school also performs well above the national average compared to similar schools. In 2000, it

came within one point of achieving its overall target of an average of 49 points per pupil. It was just one percentage point short of its target of 67 per cent of pupils achieving at least five grades in the A* to C range. A high proportion of the top grades (A* or A) were achieved in every subject taken to GCSE level, but especially in science, and geography. GCSE results in English, however, are not as high as those for mathematics and science.

Most students left the sixth form in 1999 with at least two GCE A-Levels. Between them, students achieved an average points score of 21.2, which is well above the national average of 17.9 points. In 2000, pupils' average score was not as good (19.4 points against a national average of 18.5), since the failure rate was high in some subjects, for example history and business studies. On the other hand, forty one per cent of grades were at A or B in 2000, which is well above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The large majority of pupils have positive attitudes to the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall, but a small number of boys do not reach this standard.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are both good on the whole.
Attendance	Attendance is better than average. Unauthorised absence is lower than average. Punctuality to lessons is good.

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.

Of the 65 lessons seen, six per cent (four lessons) were excellent and twenty six per cent very good. Forty five percent of lessons were good and fifteen per cent were satisfactory. Just eight per cent (five lessons) were judged unsatisfactory. These proportions of good, and especially of very good and excellent teaching, are high.

A good mixture of lessons across both key stages and the sixth form were visited. However, the main focus was on the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3, since this is where the weaker teaching was found in the last inspection. This time the overall quality of teaching was good in all three key stages.

Three quarters of the teachers were seen teaching, and almost no one was observed for more than one lesson. Nearly every teacher in some departments was observed (English, mathematics, science, humanities, social studies and modern languages), but lessons in some other subjects were

just sampled.

Three of the excellent lessons were at Key Stage 3: two in science and one in mathematics. The fourth was at Key Stage 4 in English. Very good teaching and learning was also seen at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, drama, geography and history. At Key Stage 4, the very good lessons were in English, mathematics, religious education and design and technology. In the sixth form, they were in geography and design and technology. Good teaching and learning was seen in every subject except modern foreign languages. Four of the five unsatisfactory lessons were in modern languages at Key Stage 3. The fifth lesson was in English, also at Key Stage 3.

The school meets well the needs of all of its pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The skills of numeracy are generally well taught, literacy skills slightly less so.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good breadth and balance throughout both Key Stages 3 and 4. A wide range of subjects, and a particularly wide range of combinations of subjects in the sixth form. Virtually no religious education in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision organised by a very effective learning support department. Strong and well organised support for pupils with behavioural difficulties.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils are making good progress in their mastery of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Spiritual provision is satisfactory, social provision very good, moral and cultural provision are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's care is both thorough and thoughtful. Pupils are known well as individuals and are helped to develop their potential.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management team are highly focused on the improvement of teaching and learning, to very good effect. With few exceptions, the leadership of subjects is good. Pastoral leadership is a strength of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well informed and act well as critical friends of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Better than average diagnosis of what is good and what needs to be done to raise standards even further.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well targeted to where they are needed. Financial control and strategic planning are both good. The school applies well the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Parents believe that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school is well led and managed. their children are well taught on the whole. they make good progress throughout their time in the school. they are expected to work hard at school. 	<p>Parents would like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school to work more closely with parents. more information on their children's progress, and earlier than they presently receive it. the amount and quality of homework to be less erratic.

The inspection team agreed with all the parents' positive comments. During the inspection, homework was indeed variable from subject to subject and from teacher to teacher but, at best, it was very appropriate and very relevant to the work in hand. The school should investigate ways of giving parents' more information on their children's progress, earlier in the academic year, if at all possible.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve high standards of attainment overall, by the end of each key stage and in the sixth form.

1. From a starting point of close to the national average when they enter the school, pupils achieve well above national average standards of attainment by the end of their Year 9 National Curriculum tests, at GCSE and again at A-Level.
2. In 2000, by the end of Key Stage 3 at age 14, well above average proportions of pupils achieved the expected National Curriculum level (Level 5) and above in all three core subjects, English, mathematics and science. The trend in the school's average national test scores over the last four years is an increase that is broadly in line with the national trend, but consistently about two points higher. This is equivalent to pupils being, on average, two terms ahead of pupils nationally at this age. When measured against similar schools, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is also well above the national average in mathematics and science, though not in English. (Similar schools are those whose pupils come from similar social backgrounds.)
3. When pupils reach the end of Key Stage 4, at age 16, they achieve well above average GCSE points scores overall (47.8 points against a national average of 41.5 points in 2000; 46.2 points against a national average of 38 points in 1999). Well above average proportions of pupils also achieve at least five A* to C grades (66 per cent against a national figure of 49 per cent per cent in 2000; 60.6 per cent against a national picture of 46 per cent in 1999). The trend in the school's average total GCSE points score over the past six years is above the national trend. Overall GCSE results at William Howard are improving faster than those elsewhere. The school's performance is well above the national average in terms of pupils' average GCSE points scores, when compared with similar schools. A high proportion of the top grades (A* or A) were achieved in 2000 in every subject taken to GCSE level, but especially in science and geography.
4. Most students left the sixth form in 1999 with at least two GCE A-Levels. Students achieved an average points score of 21.2, which is well above the national average of 17.9 points. In 2000, pupils' average score was not quite as good (19.4 points against a national average of 18.5), since there was a high failure rate in some subjects, for example, history and business studies. On the other hand, forty one per cent of grades were at A or B in 2000, which is well above average.

Teachers' high expectations lead to effective learning in almost all subjects.

5. Of the 65 lessons seen, six per cent (four lessons) were excellent and twenty six per cent were very good. Forty five per cent of lessons were good and fifteen per cent were satisfactory. Just eight per cent (five lessons) were judged unsatisfactory. These proportions of good, and especially of very good and excellent teaching, are high.

6. A good mixture of lessons across both key stages and the sixth form were visited, but the main focus was on the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3, since this is where the weaker teaching was found in the last inspection. Three quarters of the teachers were observed teaching, almost always for just one lesson. Nearly every teacher in some departments (English, mathematics, science, humanities, social studies and modern languages) was observed, but lessons in some other subjects were only sampled. Three of the excellent lessons were at Key Stage 3: two in science and one in mathematics. The fourth was in English at Key Stage 4. Very good teaching and learning was also seen at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, drama, geography and history. At Key Stage 4 the very good lessons were in English, mathematics, religious education, and design and technology. In the sixth form, they were in geography and design and technology. Good teaching and learning was seen in every subject except modern foreign languages. Four of the five unsatisfactory lessons were in modern languages at Key Stage 3. The fifth lesson was in English, also at Key Stage 3.

7. The excellent lessons were notable for their exceptionally good climate for learning, their very clear objectives, productive pace, sky high expectations, interesting material and, above all, for their challenge and sparkle. There were no slackers amongst the pupils; they had no time for that. The topics were made interesting. The pupils knew exactly what was required of them and by when. The teachers exuded enthusiasm, and this infected the pupils. Pupils were allowed a good degree of autonomy in some lessons. The work stretched all of them. They were not always all doing the same thing at the same time, but sometimes they were, when it was more effective to work that way.

8. In the excellent science lessons (both in Year 7) there was a very noticeable climate for learning. The scene was set and the work explained by the teacher, so briefly and concisely that there was not a wasted word. Pupils were then able to organise sections of their own work, and help was targeted only where it was needed. They were expected to work together when necessary and alone at other times, with minimum teacher intervention. In one class, they tested and classified samples of elements and recorded their findings in tables of their own design. Their recording showed a well above average understanding of how to use properties, such as hardness and electrical conductivity, to distinguish between metallic and non-metallic elements. The other class contained pupils of a wider range of attainment and was memorable, amongst other things, for the teacher's excellent classroom control, his clarity of instruction, the efficient setting of appropriate and interesting homework, and his very good use of a well organised support teacher. Pupils made good use of an excellent collection of fossils, and of the CD ROM facilities on the two computers in the room, in order to locate their particular specimen on the correct place on a historical time line.

9. An excellent English lesson in Year 11 allowed pupils to engage with an actress performing one of Alan Bennett's 'Talking Heads' monologues, whilst she remained in role. This interaction increased enormously their understanding of the text and the character. It was an excellent example of a teacher making the best possible use of the skills of one of his colleagues to thoroughly enhance pupils' learning in an extremely effective way.

10. Excellent teaching was also seen with a group of middle attaining pupils in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, when the pupils estimated the area of a whiteboard. The teacher showed his very high expectations of all pupils by targeting the most challenging questions to the higher attaining pupils in the group, while other questions were designed to encourage those pupils who were less

keen to participate. All pupil responses were valued, with the teacher listening very carefully and then responding well to their answers. In this way, for example, he picked up quickly which pupils still needed help in how to multiply using numbers between 10 and 20.

11. In all of these and other good or very good lessons, teachers showed the quality of their preparation, but also their understanding of what it is that commands the attention and respect of pupils. They also showed, in a number of cases, how to deal with attempted misbehaviour and the underachievement of individual pupils. A teacher in a Year 10 mathematics lesson was faced with a trio of difficult boys, seated in different parts of the classroom, who tried to disrupt her teaching with orchestrated humming. Without raising her voice she let them know that she was aware of what they were trying to do and was not going to stand for it. Then she raised the pace and, with a good mixture of praise for good work and a strategy of deliberately not reinforcing any further poor behaviour, she achieved her lesson objectives. By the end of the lesson, she succeeded in winning round even the 'disrupters'. Along with everyone else in the class, these pupils made very good progress in their ability to manipulate negative numbers.

12. Pupils achieve well at William Howard as a result of the good quality of teaching, with its high expectations and effective back-up systems of support where needed. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in knowledge and understanding and in the development of essential skills. Intakes of pupils that are consistently around the national average, year-on-year, end up attaining higher than average results in the end of Key Stage 3 tests, in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, and at A-Level in the sixth form. The school adds 'good value' to pupils' achievements.

The school's leadership is very effective in maintaining and raising standards, since its primary focus is on the continual improvement of teaching and learning throughout the school.

13. The school is very well led and managed. All but 14 of the 465 parents who completed the inspection questionnaire agreed. Continual improvement in the quality of teaching and learning is the school's prime aim. High standards of pupil attainment and good progress throughout the school are the result.

14. The headteacher was seconded last year to lead a nearby school in need of special measures. In the term of the inspection of William Howard, he was leading both schools, pending the arrival of a new head for the other school. This experience has sharpened both his thinking and his approach to school leadership. His strategic planning skills are now particularly well honed, and both schools have benefited as a result.

15. The headteacher has strengthened even further an already thorough monitoring system, working in partnership with a senior management team that has been temporarily enhanced during his secondment, and which has enjoyed the invaluable experience of managing William Howard School for a year. Each senior manager is attached to one or more subject areas, and leads the monitoring of those areas in a way that is much more systematic than is usually found elsewhere. Monthly departmental reviews follow a step-by-step agenda, evaluating in turn: examination and test

results, development plans, schemes of work, staff absence, pupil behaviour, the environment of the department, and the in-service training profile of each department. Classroom observation is built into the process on a regular basis. Targets are set and progress determined. Whole school initiatives, such as the monitoring of gifted and talented pupils and observations to provide evidence about the suspected underachievement of boys, are followed up within particular subject areas. In this way, weaknesses in teaching and learning are usually diagnosed early, and help and support are provided in good time.

16. Subject leaders vary in their response to the school's ambitious monitoring system. Some would prefer more of the traditional 'appraisal' approach, where colleagues invite their head of department to visit one of their lessons to observe a particular part of their work and to advise them afterwards. William Howard's system is harder edged than this, and is certainly more effective in identifying potential problem areas. It has already diagnosed both of the weaknesses found in this inspection report (standards of attainment in English and teaching and learning in modern foreign languages) and strategies are already in place to deal with them. Some department heads have embraced the system enthusiastically themselves; their departments are benefiting from much clearer objectives, with significant improvements in standards and in the quality of teaching and learning overall. The mathematics department is a good example of this.

17. The governing body is an effective one. Its documentation is very well maintained, its procedures are fully secure and meet legal requirements. Governors are more proactive at William Howard than many governors, even to the extent of having an office in the school, but they are clear about the distinction between governing and leading a school on a day-to-day basis. Much better informed than governors generally, they act very well as critical friends of the school.

18. Pastoral leadership is strong and effective. Led very well by a member of the senior management team, the heads of year and senior tutors provide a high standard of care. This is not without a cost, however. Two heads of year have recently resigned for personal reasons, and another was spoken of by students as needing more time to do justice to his pastoral work. The school is right to examine alternative methods of staffing in order to carry out some of the more routine and time-consuming aspects of pastoral care. This would enable more time to be spent on the positive aspects of praising pupils for the good work they do.

Pupils are well provided for, both academically and socially

19. Pupils at William Howard School are well provided for in both the social and the academic sense.

20. Year 7 pupils spoke warmly of their induction day. They enjoyed the lesson they did on that day. They think the teachers are helpful and that the school is well disciplined. Just one thing needs improving, they thought; the school would be better if it had 'another' swimming pool. Year 9 pupils praised the good range of extra-curricular activities the school provides, particularly sport, computing, drama and music. Year 11 pupils were equally supportive of

the school in general, particularly its pastoral care system. They appreciated the surveillance cameras, which means they can confidently leave their outdoor clothes in the cloakroom areas. The common rooms and the variety of foods offered at the various serving areas were also items meeting approval. Students in the sixth form praised the wide range of subjects the school offers at the sixth form level, their common room facilities and the learning resources centre.

21. The learning resource area is mentioned with pride by everyone in the school at some stage or other, and is an ever-growing strength of the school. It is used well throughout the school day and until 5.00 p.m. each evening (4.30 p.m. on Fridays). So popular is lunchtime usage that two separate 20-minute periods are allocated for pupils and, at the time of looking, these slots were all booked up for at least four days ahead. During a visit by an inspector, groups of pupils, of all ages, were checking or researching project work, using encyclopaedias, software and spreadsheets. Use of the Internet is very carefully monitored (misuse would be a reason for disciplinary action). This area is an excellent provision that is encouraging and facilitating the research and independent learning habit. The school recognises that its use still needs to be built more into the schemes of work of some departments.

22. The school has more common rooms than are found in most schools. Common rooms are well supervised, including by surveillance cameras, and are cleaned midway through each day in order to keep up the good standards of cleanliness in the school. Dining facilities are spread throughout the school, with one kept exclusively for the new intake year. This greatly helps the transition of pupils from primary school, and is one of the reasons given by Year 7 pupils as to why they feel safe and secure at the school.

23. The sixth form are given a wider choice of subject combinations than students in many schools. Some parents complained to the inspectors of the time that this takes to sort out at the beginning of the school year, but this is partly due to its sophistication. It seeks to deliver what the pupils need, allowing combinations that cut across the traditional arts and science barriers. The solution, this year, involved a good number of classes being offered in twilight teaching sessions, for up to two hours after school.

24. Pastoral care is good but exacting for the people in charge. The school is at an advanced stage of investigating how the duties of a year head can be made less onerous, by employing a number of non-teaching personnel, skilled, for example, in social work or educational welfare. These 'field workers' would work under the supervision of a senior pastoral member of the teaching staff, releasing time for present staff to be more pro-active and to become more involved in the praising and other positive aspects of pastoral care.

25. Alongside the well established links with families and schools in France and Italy, the school has a strong and productive link with Uru school in Tanzania. So far, five parties of students, teachers and governors have travelled to Tanzania to live and work for one month at a time alongside their Tanzanian counterparts, and vice versa. The fifth group from Tanzania visited Brampton in 1998. A sixth form participant in the exchange described the Tanzanians as 'older, brighter and speaking better English than us'.

26. The school has a larger proportion of part-time staff than most schools. This is a strength, on balance, but is not without its risks. It allows for greater staffing flexibility in each department, for example enabling more classes in a particular subject to be timetabled simultaneously than would otherwise be possible. On the other hand, maintaining the high quality of staffing across such a large number of part-timers is difficult, and is not achieved in all cases.

Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well catered for

27. The school puts more funds than it receives for this purpose into support for pupils with special educational needs. It also pinpoints very effectively and monitors well the progress of higher attaining pupils, especially those who are gifted and talented.

28. The learning support department is well led, and is given a higher status than in many schools, for example in the number of promoted posts. There have been significant improvements in the way it operates since the time of the last inspection. More pupils are taught directly by learning support teachers, and there is more of an intensive withdrawal system that concentrates on literacy skills than there used to be. The numbers of learning support assistants is being increased, as a more cost-effective way of supporting pupils within lessons. Sixth form volunteers, trained in paired reading, are used effectively in some classes. Heads of department have been given some in-service training on the development of writing frames and other strategies for improving literacy. Examples of the good effects of this and other strategies were seen in lessons.

29. Pupils with emotional and behavioural needs are well cared for. The well supervised quiet room for Year 9 pupils acts well as an alternative to suspension, in times of difficulty. This system kicks in when these pupils are thought to be in a position to benefit from a short period of individual work, or the teacher and rest of the class need a short period of respite from some unacceptable behaviour. It is seen to be a fair and well managed system, and one of the reasons for the reduced number of temporary suspensions this year. The school employs the services of a specialist behaviour management consultant for one day each week. Used on a one-to-one basis with disaffected pupils, and also to advise teaching staff, his influence is having a positive effect in the school.

30. Potentially gifted and talented pupils are effectively pinpointed and well monitored. They are identified early by use of standard tests administered in the autumn term of Year 7. These pupils are then monitored carefully, sometimes even by shadowing them to get a first hand account of their experiences and progress in particular lessons. This monitoring programme is quite extensive in some terms, and throws up useful discussion material. For example, 30 lessons were observed in one autumn term. The observations last academic year were held within the period of a fortnight in the spring term of 2000. Students are talked to and their work discussed with them. In recent years, in a programme begun in 1996/97, their curriculum has been enriched through a study support programme. This has, in the past, included work on different aspects of English literature with a retired English teacher, a local

novelist and a local children's writer. In the spring term of 1999, a science enrichment programme was run for 5 pupils from each of Years 7, 8 and 9. One of the useful spin-offs from this initiative is that departmental schemes of work now include extension activities for high attaining pupils. As a related initiative, the school has decided this year to focus on ensuring a closer match of work to the needs of individual pupils. A further focus is to look for possible underachievement by boys.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Whilst being close to the national average, standards of attainment in English are not always high enough, particularly at Key Stage 4.

31. Pupils are not achieving as well in English as they are in some of their other subjects.
32. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected National Curriculum Levels 5 and 6 at the end of Key Stage 3 in Year 2000 are well above the national average. Nevertheless, they are only above the national average when compared with the results of similar schools. By contrast, the results in both mathematics and science are well above average compared with similar schools.
33. At the end of Key Stage 4 in Year 2000, the differences between the results in English and those in mathematics and science were even more marked. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A* to C is much lower in English than the respective figures for both mathematics and science. Whilst the English results are close to the national average, those for both mathematics and science are well above average. When compared with the results for similar schools, the science results are in the top five per cent of schools nationally, and the mathematics results are well above average, but the English results are well below average. Girls outperformed the boys in all three subjects, but the girls at William Howard were further behind girls nationally in English than the boys were behind boys nationally.
34. The pattern of GCSE results in 1999 was similar to that in 2000 in some respects, but not all. Results were above the national average in English, but well above average in both mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, the results were close to the national average in English, but above average in Mathematics, and well above average in science. Boys outperformed girls in both mathematics and science (countering the national trend). In English, the girls did better overall than the boys, but by less than the national difference between boys and girls.
35. One possible reason for the weaker performances in English is that their schemes of work are less detailed and less structured than those in either mathematics or science. Another factor, revealed by the scrutiny of pupils' work, is the much lower quantity of work expected in English of lower and middle attaining pupils compared with those with higher attainment. There is some weaker teaching, where lessons have insufficient structure, alongside some teaching that is very good and excellent. Leadership issues are undoubtedly another factor. Unlike other departments in the school, the English department does not make

effective use of the statistical information on relative performances provided for it by the senior management team. It does not use this information to determine why English results are erratic from year to year, or why they compare unfavourably with those of other core subjects.

There is some unsatisfactory teaching and learning, particularly at Key Stage 3, especially in modern foreign languages.

36. Against a background of significant strengths in the quality of teaching and learning across the school as a whole, including a good measure of very good and excellent teaching, inspectors observed some weaker lessons. Five of the sixty-five lessons observed were judged to be unsatisfactory, all at Key Stage 3. Four of these were in modern languages, and the other was in English. Parents in their questionnaire responses wrote of excellent teaching in the school, but of some weaknesses. Pupils told inspectors that some teachers are better than others at explaining things, and that some teachers in Year 9 lessons, for example, overreact to pupils who try to provoke them, do not get on well with pupils and do not involve them enough in the lessons.

37. The weaker lessons in modern foreign languages are due to a combination of factors. There is little use of the target foreign language and too much use of English. Expectations are too low for what pupils are capable of in a whole lesson, and there is too much uncritical reliance on a particular course book. Teachers show too little appreciation of pupils' learning needs. There is too little appreciation of the need to vary the work to suit the ability range of particular groups, and too much tolerance of poor pupil behaviour. Additionally, there is an inability, in some cases, to interest pupils sufficiently in the work being covered, to make it interesting enough to hold their attention and prevent them from carrying on private conversations.

38. Pupils in a Year 8 French class were not given enough encouragement to express themselves in French, and so did not have enough opportunities to develop speaking skills. Pupils in the Year 7 classes are not making as much progress as they should be. In one lesson, this was because of low expectations of their behaviour and inappropriate teaching strategies. Timing was poor because instructions were too long and there was no sense of urgency. Too much English and not enough of the target language gave too little challenge. The problems in another lesson included inadequate planning, with the teacher just working through the course book uncritically. The language was not presented in a clear enough context, and there was not enough visual reinforcement. In two Year 8 Italian classes, pupils were not developing speaking skills sufficiently. As in some French lessons, there was too much use of English, too low an expectation of pupils' ability to operate in a foreign language. There was also too little emphasis on pupils' accuracy in pronunciation, and too much translation instead of using visual stimuli to give contextual clues to meaning. Pupils' standards in some Year 8 language classes are not as high as they should be in their second year of studying the language.

39. A Year 9 English lesson was unsatisfactory because it was not planned carefully enough, and was too ambitious for the range of pupil attainment in that particular group. The teacher's management skills were not strong enough to sustain the pupils' interest in the analysis of one character in a book for long enough. The more vocal boys lost attention as the teacher talked for too long. Inadequate learning was the consequence of weak lesson structure.

40. Other teachers, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, struggle at times to keep pupils' energies sufficiently focused on useful work. Sometimes this was mainly the pupils' fault, and the teachers who moved up a gear, exercising their skills to the full, were able to focus pupils back onto the task for most of the time. On other occasions, however, problems were caused by teachers' weak planning, specifically their lack of clarity about exactly what the pupils were expected to learn in a particular lesson. For instance, pupils in a Year 9 science class, working on forces, became confused about what was expected of them, after the worksheet they were given did not relate to the practical demonstration they had just seen. Not surprisingly they became restless (particularly some of the boys) and the teacher had to work hard to retrieve the situation.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

41. The school's staff and governors are in a strong position to remedy the few weaknesses identified in this inspection. They should continue the school's focus on continually improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to maintain high standards, and should also:

- Raise standards of attainment in English, particularly by the end of Key Stage 4, by:
 - * monitoring the quality of planning to ensure that objectives are clear and that the intended work is well suited to hold the interest and meet the needs of all pupils;
 - * ensuring that the department analyses assessment information in full to identify where there is underachievement and indicate changes needed to curriculum and teaching to secure improvement;
 - * raising teachers' expectations for the quantity of work produced by pupils of average attainment and below.

- Improve the small amount of weaker teaching and learning, particularly at Key Stage 3, and especially in modern languages, by:
 - * up-dating the teaching skills of some modern languages teachers;
 - * further developing teachers' behaviour management skills.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	65
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	26	45	15	8	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1008	225
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	77	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	224	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	109	89	198

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	89	79	72
	Girls	81	64	60
	Total	170	143	132
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	86	72	67
	National	63	62	55
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	51	52	37
	National	28	38	23

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	65	69	69
	Girls	76	64	60
	Total	141	133	129
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	71	67	65
	National	64	64	60
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	30	44	43
	National	31	37	28

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	91	84	175

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	51	85	86
	Girls	55	82	83
	Total	106	167	169
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61	95	97
	National	46.6	90.9	95.8

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46
	National	38

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-Level or AS-Level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	39	42

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	19.0	23.2	21.2	4.0	0	2.0
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1183
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	109	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	67.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff:

Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	337

Deployment of teachers:

Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.0
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Average teaching group size:

Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	25.1
Key Stage 4	23.1
Sixth Form	12.8

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3 347 663.00
Total expenditure	3 411 281.00
Expenditure per pupil	2862.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	63 370.00
Balance carried forward to next year	(248.00)

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1300
Number of questionnaires returned	463

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	48	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	54	3	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	61	8	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	57	16	3	3
The teaching is good.	31	63	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	46	24	4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	42	7	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	47	21	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	43	48	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	56	5	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	48	7	1	5