

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST PETER'S ROMAN CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**

Gorton, Manchester

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 131880

Headteacher: Mr J. McNerney

Reporting inspector: Gillian Salter-Smith
8329

Dates of inspection: 26th – 30th March 2001

Inspection number: 230040

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Holmcroft Road
Gorton
Manchester

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: The Reverend J. Kennedy

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8329	G. Salter-Smith	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11450	L. H. Kuraishi	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2740	E. B. Barratt	Team inspector	Geography Equality of opportunity	
20119	T. Bell	Team inspector	Mathematics	
21954	T. Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology	
10275	J. Cosgrove	Team inspector	History	
17015	L. Denholm	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
12460	J. M. Jones	Team inspector	Science	
20192	T. J. McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
15551	P. A. Mitchell	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
23308	J. S. Morrell	Team inspector	Music	
19214	G. Price	Team inspector	English	

17404	J. Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Peter's Roman Catholic High School is a voluntary-aided comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. The school opened in September 1999 as a result of the amalgamation of three small Catholic high schools. It serves the east side of Manchester. The school is average in size and of the 852 pupils on roll 75 per cent are of white UK and Irish heritage and 25 per cent come from a rich diversity of ethnic backgrounds. These include pupils of Black African, Black Caribbean and other Black heritages. In addition there are Pakistani, Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi pupils. There are 75 per cent of pupils of white UK heritage on roll. Compared with most schools there are more pupils with English as an additional language. There are 11 refugee pupils from the Czech Republic and there are 50 pupils from Traveller families. Boys outnumber girls significantly. The number of pupils receiving free school meals, at 53.2 per cent, is very high compared to the national average. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is around average. There are fewer pupils with statements of need than is found nationally. Over 14 per cent of the pupils on roll joined the school or left at times other than the usual times. Pupils arrive at the school with well below average levels of attainment. The social and economic backgrounds of pupils are disadvantaged to levels well below that generally found across the country. The school is part of the East Manchester Education Action Zone and is part of the Excellence in Cities initiative.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This newly formed school is developing well and has established a number of effective features which provide a secure foundation on which to build for a successful future. Strong leadership and management have helped the school to overcome many of the difficulties associated with the recent amalgamation not least those imposed by the split-site arrangement. There is good commitment to improve further. Although the teaching is good, the achievement of pupils is only satisfactory because of the very low rates of attendance and the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils. The cost of running this split-site school is high but overall the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership and clear educational direction provided by the head teacher, senior management team and other key staff.
- Well above average proportion of pupils gaining one GCSE when compared to similar schools.
- Above average standards in physical education in Year 9, performing arts and information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 11.
- Good teaching overall with a significant proportion of very good or excellent teaching.
- Very good support for individual pupils in the special educational needs base, the learning support unit and for pupils with English as an additional language.
- Caring and compassionate personal support and guidance for individual pupils, including very good provision of mentors.
- Strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils no matter what their background or circumstances.

What could be improved

- Well below average standards in pupils' academic work.
- Underachievement in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- The attitude and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils.
- Very low rates of attendance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school opened on two sites in September 1999 improvement has been good. Academic standards are improving. There are fewer exclusions. The quality of staffing is improving, especially in mathematics. Significant progress has been made in providing for pupils at risk of exclusion. Attendance is improving slowly but remains a significant concern.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	N/A	N/A	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

In 2000, when compared to similar schools, results in National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 were average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Pupils' results were well below the average for all schools in English. The results for mathematics and science are among the lowest five per cent found in schools nationally. In English, although girls perform better than boys the difference between them is not as great as in other schools. The school has set challenging targets in English, mathematics and science for the 2001 national tests taken by pupils aged 14. Pupils are on course to achieve these targets which represents improvement and a rising trend.

In 2000, the average number of points scored in GCSE examinations was below average compared to similar schools and well below the average for all schools. The school was successful in helping almost every pupil (97 per cent) achieve at least one grade at GCSE which was well above average compared to similar schools and average compared to all schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five higher grades (A*-C) and five grades (A*-G) at GCSE was average compared to similar schools and well below the average for all schools. Girls continue to achieve better results than boys at age 16. Not all subjects analyse the results in sufficient detail to identify the attainment of different groups of pupils. The school's analysis shows that girls from ethnic minority groups attain better results in mathematics and modern foreign languages compared with most pupils in the school. In geography this is the case for both girls and boys. In mathematics most boys from ethnic minority groups attain lower results than other pupils in the school. The school is on course to achieve ambitious yet realistic targets for GCSE results in 2001. These represent improvement and a rising trend.

Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below the national average overall. In

physical education at age 14 and performing arts and accredited courses in ICT at age 16 standards are above the national average. Standards in art and design and physical education at age 16 are average. In all other subjects standards are below average. Pupils' low levels of skill in literacy hinders their progress in many subjects. The school recognises this and there is much effective work carried out on improving pupils' skills in literacy across subjects. Pupils' skills in numeracy are low but improving. ICT skills are below average apart from pupils in Year 7 and those in Years 10 and 11 taking accredited courses.

Many pupils achieve particularly well in practical, physical and creative subjects such as performing arts, physical education, art and design. Pupils in Year 7 and those taking accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in ICT. Taking into account the well below average starting point of most pupils, their achievement overall is satisfactory. There is underachievement in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 which is often associated with lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils. In lessons where they receive specialist help, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress. In lessons where there is no additional support, progress for these pupils is less consistent and overall their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils from ethnic minority groups make satisfactory progress overall. In subjects where achievement has been analysed, there is some evidence of underachievement of boys from ethnic minority groups and good achievement among girls, for example in mathematics. In geography, all pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve well in examinations. Traveller pupils make satisfactory progress overall. However, the poor attendance of many Traveller pupils affects their achievement. Inconsistent attendance of a significant minority of pupils across the school holds back their achievement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Unsatisfactory, although many pupils enjoy school and take part in extra activities. Where teaching is good most pupils have positive attitudes. However, in around one in six lessons some pupils are reluctant to learn despite good teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Where teaching is good pupils usually behave well. Upper and lower schools are generally orderly but there are incidents of poor behaviour out of lessons. Some lessons are disturbed by unacceptable behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships are good between most pupils and with teachers. Pupils respond well to the Catholic ethos. Many pupils lack the confidence to contribute extensively to class discussion and to organise their own work.
Attendance	Very low. A small core of pupils who do not attend and irregular attendance by a significant minority.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years
Lessons seen overall	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 and makes a substantial contribution to pupils' learning and overall achievement. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons, good or better in 65 per cent of lessons and is very good or excellent in 22 per cent. Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. Staffing difficulties in mathematics and science have led to inconsistencies in teaching and learning for some classes. Teaching and pupils' learning are very good in performing arts in Years 10 and 11 and physical education in Years 7 to 9. Pupils learn more readily in practical and creative subjects and in ICT. Teaching in the learning support bases is good overall; it helps pupils with special educational needs and those at risk of exclusion to make progress. Pupils from ethnic minority groups, asylum seekers and pupils from Traveller families are well supported.

There is a clear emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills. The emphasis on technical language, the display of key words and the use of support structures to enable pupils to write at length are becoming regular features of teaching and learning across some subjects. In mathematics lessons there is a clear focus on improving pupils' skills in number. Teachers generally exercise good classroom control. They know the pupils well and build up good relationships. In the excellent and very good lessons, activities move at a good pace. Pupils are inspired and well motivated. Teachers expect and achieve high standards. Of the 148 lessons observed only five were unsatisfactory. These were found in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, art and design and personal and social education. These lessons were sometimes linked to supply teaching.

The rate at which pupils learn is satisfactory overall and does not match the good teaching because there is a significant minority of pupils who are not committed to learning, do not attend regularly or behave badly in lessons. In a small number of classes pupils have lost interest as the result of a series of temporary teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Very good equality of opportunity. Very good careers education and links with the local community. Good extra-curricular activities. Successful GNVQ course in ICT. Further vocational opportunities needed. Statutory requirements not met in music Years 7 to 9 nor in ICT across subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall and especially where pupils receive specialist help. Work is not always well matched to pupils' individual needs in all lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Close monitoring of pupils' progress and specialist teaching helps pupils to transfer into main lessons smoothly.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Good opportunities for spiritual and social development. The school puts into practice its mission statement which is based on Christ's teachings and gospel values.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Staff know the pupils well and show care and compassion for their well being and personal development. Very good mentoring programme. Procedures for child protection, health and safety are in place. Assessment information is not yet used effectively to guide teachers' planning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. Informative reports on pupils' progress and newsletters are sent to parents regularly. Contact with parents is prompt when the need arises. Parents are happy to contact the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Very good leadership by the head teacher, senior management team and some key staff. Clear educational direction through a period of instability and change. The right priorities are identified and effective action is taken.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a full part in making decisions. Many are involved in the day-to-day life of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. The monitoring of teaching is in the early stages of development and is beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Education Action Zone and Excellence in Cities funding is used well. The split-site presents many difficulties which the school manages well. Good financial control. Not enough opportunity to use ICT in subjects. Inadequate libraries.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expectations to work hard and achieve; • that most pupils make progress; • improvement in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils since the school opened; • the provision for pupils with special educational needs; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework; • the way the school works with the parents; • the information about their child's progress; • the behaviour of some pupils; • leadership and management; • teaching in classes where there is staff absence; • the way in which incidents of bullying are dealt with.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive views. Inspectors have no overall concern about homework. The way the school works with parents, the information parents receive, the leadership and management of the school and the way the school deals with incidents of bullying inspectors found to be satisfactory or better. Inspectors share parents' concerns about the behaviour of some pupils and teaching in some classes where there have been high rates of staff absence.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The overall standards of pupils when they come to the school, based on national tests, are well below average. There are a few pupils who have reached above average standards but it is a far smaller proportion than is found in most schools.

2. Results in the tests taken in 2000 by pupils aged 14 were well below the average for all schools in English and in mathematics and science were among the lowest five per cent found in schools nationally. When compared with schools with pupils of a similar background, results were average in English and below average in mathematics and science. In mathematics and science the proportion of pupils gaining above average results are average compared with similar schools, suggesting that higher-attaining pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Although girls perform better than boys in English the difference between them is not as great as in other schools. The school was disappointed with the 2000 results. Many of their more experienced staff were deployed to teach the many Year 11 groups which were retained as they had existed in the three previous schools. This left fewer experienced teachers to teach the lower years. One of the consequences of this was the disappointing results at the age of 14. However, the school has redressed the imbalance of teachers; the school is altogether a more settled environment and the school is on course to achieve the challenging targets it has set. This represents a rising trend.

3. In 2000 the average number of points scored in GCSE examinations was well below the average for all schools and just below average compared with schools having pupils from a similar background. The school was particularly successful in helping almost every pupil (97 per cent) achieve at least one grade at GCSE which was average compared with all schools and well above average compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving five higher grades (A*-C), at 19 per cent, and five grades (A*-G), at 78 per cent, at GCSE was well below the average for all schools and average compared with similar schools. Girls continue to achieve better results than boys at age 16 and the gap is wider than at age 14. Work has started on analysing results in departments but not all subjects have carried out a close analysis of the performance of all the different groups of pupils present in the school. Analysis of results in mathematics and modern foreign languages reveal that girls from ethnic minority groups often achieve better results than other pupils in the school whereas in mathematics boys from ethnic minority groups often underachieve. In geography both girls and boys from ethnic minority groups achieve more highly than other pupils.

4. The school has set ambitious yet realistic targets for GCSE results in 2001. The average points score is set to increase from 23.8 to 26, 30 per cent of pupils are expected to achieve five or more A*-C grades and 94 per cent of pupils should achieve one or more A*-G grade. Based on work seen during the inspection and the results of internal tests and examinations, the school is on course to achieve the targets it has set. This represents improvement and a rising trend. There were 24 pupils who studied vocational subjects in 2000 and the success rate overall was 37.5 per cent.

5. The best results were found in art and design, where boys achieved particularly well, performing arts, food technology, textiles and ICT. In these subjects results for higher grades were getting close to national averages. In all other subjects the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades was well below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils gaining at least an A*-G grade was close to the national average in many subjects. Taking into

account the well below average starting point of many of the pupils this is a more realistic indicator. When comparing the proportions of pupils reaching higher grades (A*-C) in English, mathematics and science pupils' results are average compared with similar schools. As in the results of tests taken at age 14, overall this suggests that the school ensures that higher-attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily. Although results in mathematics, single award science and English were well below national averages most pupils achieved better results in these subjects than in most of their other subjects. Pupils do not achieve as well in geography, history, French and physical education compared to the other subjects they take. Most pupils achieve better results in art and design than they do in their other subjects.

6. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below the national average overall. In physical education at the age of 14 and performing arts and ICT in accredited courses at age 16 standards are above average. Standards in art and design and physical education at age 16 are average. Standards of work seen in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages overall and in design and technology at age 16 are well below average. In all other subjects standards are below average.

7. In English, many pupils are hesitant and lack confidence when speaking for purposes other than social conversation. Vocabulary and range of expression are often very limited. By the age of 16 many pupils have gained more confidence in their oral work but their spoken contributions remain brief. They read with sound understanding. Pupils produce work that is carefully written and well presented but levels of accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation are below average. Pupils have difficulty in writing at length. Higher-attaining pupils produce very good examples of imaginative writing, for example, in their work on modern narratives such as "Gregory's Girl" but weaknesses of expression are still to be found.

8. In mathematics, pupils' number skills are improving as a result of mental mathematics activities. Higher-attaining pupils are able to use numbers confidently. Older pupils are gaining confidence in using algebra, for example, top set Year 10 pupils substitute formulae and find values in quadratic equations. Some lower-attaining pupils are insecure in their understanding of number and are not sure of the values of numbers in decimals. Pupils are improving their ability to gather information, organise this in tables and draw graphs of the results. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. However, the work of some boys in particular is careless, untidy and badly presented.

9. In science, by the age of 16, the small proportion of higher-attaining pupils have a good grasp of the science needed for the higher level GCSE examination. In a revision session on atomic structure top set pupils understand and remember the structure of the commonest atoms and know the theory behind ionic bonding. Pupils in lower sets can follow qualitative ideas but some have difficulty describing processes in their own words. Pupils in a Year 9 lower set have difficulty in understanding the particle theory, partly because they have missed lessons. They can describe the difference between particles in a solid, a liquid and a gas but cannot apply this to the idea of change from a solid to a liquid to a gas. Pupils' coursework is hampered by their poor writing skills.

10. In performing arts, pupils gain a good range of theatrical skills which they used effectively in their production of "Caliban" for the Manchester Arts Festival. In ICT, pupils following accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 display good levels of competence in using desktop publishing software, spreadsheets, databases and some aspects of control technology. They search for information using CD-ROM and the Internet and use scanners and digital cameras. However, those pupils who do not take an accredited course do not achieve these high standards. In physical education pupils achieve high standards in

basketball and have a good understanding of health related fitness. They are less secure when evaluating performance. In art and design, pupils show strengths in graphic design but standards of drawing and painting from direct observation are below average. In design and technology standards in practical work are better than in theory. Pupils use tools and equipment safely but find design difficult because their basic drawing skills are weak. In geography, most pupils develop good skills in map work and are factually accurate. In history, pupils analyse different interpretations of events but do not do so in any great depth. They know the importance of using reliable sources. In music, younger pupils have a good knowledge of rhythmic notation and they sing confidently but over the next two years do not develop these skills extensively. In modern foreign languages, pupils read and listen satisfactorily but the skills of speaking and writing are less secure.

11. Taking into account the well below average starting point of most pupils, they achieve satisfactorily overall. Pupils' achievements are particularly noteworthy in practical, physical and creative subjects such as physical education, performing arts, art and design and accredited courses in ICT. In many of these subjects achievement depends on skills other than literacy skill. There is no doubt that pupils' well below average standard of literacy is holding back their achievement overall. There is underachievement in mathematics and science, in particular in Years 7 to 9, and in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.

12. A number of factors have a positive effect on pupils' achievement. The standard of much of the teaching is good or better and this helps pupils to maintain interest, effort and application in much of their work. The provision of mentors from both within and beyond the school for many pupils helps to maintain their motivation and focus on the tasks that are important. The learning support bases provide valuable support both within the bases and out in lessons for pupils with a great range of special needs.

13. There are factors which hold back pupils' achievement. Poor levels of attendance lead to a lack of continuity in teaching and learning, especially for those pupils attending intermittently or not at all. The number of pupils who join the school or leave at times other than Year 7 and Year 11, at around 15 per cent, is higher than in other schools and this affects continuity of learning. In mathematics and, to a lesser extent in science and art and design, staffing difficulties have meant that some classes have not had regular teaching over a period of time. This has resulted, not only in a lack of continuity in teaching and learning, but also in reduced motivation and a loss of interest on behalf of some pupils. The attitude and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils are also factors holding back pupils' progress. Some pupils come to school very reluctant to learn and with little aspiration or ambition. Good teaching helps many pupils to overcome this inertia but other pupils remain uninspired. For these pupils homework is often not completed, work is not well organised or well presented and they take little interest in lessons. In many subjects teachers do not match tasks closely enough to pupils' learning needs and consequently higher-attaining pupils, often those identified as gifted and talented, find work too easy and lower-attaining pupils, often with special educational needs, find it too difficult and overall their progress is hindered.

14. Pupils' low levels of skill in literacy hinders their progress in many subjects. In many areas there is much reliance upon worksheets requiring only short written answers and pupils have difficulty in writing at length. Pupils' reading skills meet the demands of most subjects, although lower-attaining pupils on occasions struggle to read materials provided. The need to improve pupils' literacy skills is recognised by the school and work has started on teaching technical language and the use of supporting structures to help pupils to write at length.

15. The mathematics department has a numeracy policy and lessons are planned to develop pupils' skills with number competently: mentally, orally and in writing. Pupils'

standards of attainment are low but improving as a result. In lessons, lack of number skills does not impede progress. Number work is matched to pupil's stages of understanding. Pupils measure and calculate accurately, carry out surveys and present information in tables and draw graphs and comment on what they show. Pupils apply their skills in subjects such as science, geography, ICT and design and technology.

16. Pupils' skills in ICT are below average overall. Around one third of pupils take accredited courses in ICT in Years 10 and 11 and they reach above average standards. Pupils across the school do not have enough opportunity to use their ICT skills in their other subjects. Pupils in Year 8 and 9 and around two thirds of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught ICT for just part of each year and this does not give these pupils the opportunity to reach the expected standards. As the time given to teaching ICT increases standards are improving and this is evident in Year 7 where most pupils reach the expected standards for their age.

Special educational needs

17. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and in lessons across the school they make satisfactory progress. In lessons held in the learning support base pupils with learning difficulties make good progress towards their specific targets. They are taught the basic skills of literacy and numeracy well. The work is carefully structured and based on accurate assessment of individual need. They learn in small steps and achieve well. For example, one pupil who started school in September 2000 with no reading skills and who was not interested in learning now reads and writes simple texts with enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment. Pupils receive good quality support, both in the base and in the classrooms, from learning support assistants who are well trained and very competent. There are very good relationships between the special needs co-ordinator, the learning support assistants and the pupils. Pupils work hard and increase their confidence as well as their skills.

18. Disaffected pupils who are in danger of being excluded from school make good progress in the learning support unit. Here they receive good teaching and are helped to learn how to control their behaviour and improve concentration. They achieve well, their confidence and self-esteem increases and they work hard. This improves the standard of their work and is also helping to improve their attendance rate. Pupils are re-integrated into their classes carefully and sensitively with support from well-trained behaviour support assistants who work very well with the pupils. For example, two pupils in Years 10 and 11 who attended the unit have been successfully returned to their own classes, with some support from behaviour support assistants. The learning support bases and the work they do to help pupils to achieve satisfactorily are a reflection of the school's strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils.

19. In some subject areas adapted work is provided and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress even when there is no support available. However, in other subjects, including mathematics and modern foreign language lessons, adapted work is not always provided and they do not achieve as well as they could. In the lessons where pupils are supported by learning or behaviour support assistants they make good progress but there are too many lessons where this support is not available and their progress is less secure.

20. Pupils from Traveller families achieve satisfactorily but high absence rates, especially as pupils get older, impede their progress. A literacy project run by the Manchester Traveller Education Service is successful in improving reading, writing and spelling skills for those pupils who attend, but too few attend school on a regular basis to benefit fully. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall and very good progress when they receive specialist help. Pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve satisfactorily overall. However, in some subjects, such as mathematics, boys from ethnic minority backgrounds are not achieving as well as they might and, in mathematics and modern

foreign languages, girls from ethnic minority groups achieve more highly than other pupils. Pupils identified as gifted and talented make satisfactory progress overall. They benefit from a good range of additional and extra-curricular activities but work in lessons is not consistently challenging enough to secure better progress overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are unsatisfactory. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall, and relationships are generally good. Attendance is poor. The majority of pupils who attend regularly are enthusiastic about their school. Many talk about their favourite subjects and older pupils appreciate the value of good teaching. Many pupils are enthusiastic about what they are doing in lessons and invite visitors to join in with their activities. Pupils particularly enjoy practical, physical and creative activities. A good proportion of pupils take part in extra-curricular activities. Sports activities are well attended as are homework clubs and revision classes. Year 11 pupils taking the performing arts course show a high level of commitment to rehearsal of their production which was presented as part of the Manchester Arts Festival. The majority of parents answering the inspection questionnaire endorse the view that their children enjoy school and are happy in it.

22. However, in a significant proportion of lessons pupils' attitude to their work is unsatisfactory, sometimes despite good and very good teaching. A minority of pupils do not come to the school willing to learn. These pupils lack motivation, are not keen to work and make only minimum effort in lessons. This is sometimes linked to classes where there has been a high number of temporary teachers. Some pupils have difficulty in concentrating in lessons and do not take homework tasks seriously. On the whole, teachers do a good job in motivating most pupils and encouraging them to learn. However, pupils have felt unsettled by the amalgamation of the three schools and some have resented the changes it has meant for them. The reluctance to learn is more widespread than is found in many schools and it does have an effect on how well pupils achieve.

23. Behaviour in and out of classrooms is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils usually behave well in response to firm guidance and good teaching. Parents and pupils feel that there has been a distinct improvement in behaviour since the school opened. Pupils appreciate the recognition given to good effort or behaviour during the lessons. The majority of pupils understand, know and follow the clear code of conduct. Upper and lower schools are generally orderly and most pupils play well together at break times and lunchtime. However, there are some incidents of poor behaviour among lower school pupils while entering or leaving the classrooms during the break time. Although incidents of oppressive behaviour do occur they are infrequent and pupils are confident that the teachers and the staff deal with incidents effectively. Pupils talk freely about incidents of bullying and racism in the community and both teachers and pupils agree that the school works hard to control oppressive behaviour.

24. Although the behaviour of the majority of pupils in lessons is satisfactory there are too many lessons where the inappropriate behaviour of a few restricts the learning of the whole group. Such incidents are scattered across various subjects so only have a limited impact on learning in individual subjects. On occasions pupils lack respect when talking to teachers; they are unco-operative and are reluctant to follow simple instructions. In upper school some pupils display immature behaviour which is not helpful. Although the school has strategies in place for dealing with such disruption in lessons, these are not always proving effective.

25. In the first year of the new school, there were sixty one fixed-period and one permanent exclusions of pupils for reasons of poor behaviour. This is a significant number, but reflects the school's determination to deal with such problems robustly. Since then, the

exclusion rate has declined significantly and the pupils, in conversation, shared with inspectors their understanding that the school expects high standards of behaviour.

26. Most pupils develop satisfactorily into mature and responsible young adults. The vast majority of pupils like and respect their teachers and relationships are generally good. Most pupils respond well to good teaching and are anxious to succeed and make progress. In the best examples pupils co-operate well in group work, discuss issues sensibly and handle and share materials and equipment with care and respect. Some pupils show initiative in managing their own learning and willingly help other pupils. For example in an ICT lesson one pupil helped another pupil to generate a report from a database. However, in a number of lessons pupils lack confidence when talking to each other about their work and sharing ideas either in small groups or with the whole class. A number of pupils have difficulty in organising themselves and their work and consequently their work is poorly presented and homework is not always completed. There are limited opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities within the school community or for their own learning.

27. An overall sense of respect for one another is created successfully in the school and pupils respond well to the Catholic ethos. They give generously to a variety of charities. Some pupils enter the school with poorly developed values and staff work hard to teach all pupils to take responsibility and to develop self-confidence and a sense of responsibility. The school has worked hard since it opened to build good relationships among pupils coming from different communities and backgrounds. For example, during the inspection the headteacher effectively gave a message of tolerance and understanding towards asylum seekers and refugees during an upper school assembly. As a result, most pupils understand that all people are not the same and that the differences should be celebrated. Pupils of different ethnic heritage, age groups, gender or abilities form positive relationships with each other and with adults. Asylum seekers, pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and pupils from the Traveller community are generally well integrated into the main-stream school population.

28. Within both learning support bases pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties work well. They are interested in their work, work hard and behave well. Adults value the pupils' achievements, praise them for their efforts and always make them feel welcome. This helps pupils to want to learn. Within the learning support base pupils know how to use their own individual program on the computer. They start work promptly, concentrate well and learn to record their attainment in individual files. These they complete honestly and regularly with a comment on how well they feel they have done. This is helping pupils to become more independent and to know how well they are progressing. It motivates pupils to try to achieve their targets.

29. Levels of attendance are very low. Rates of unauthorised absence are above average. A small core of pupils, around six per cent, do not attend and are very rarely, if ever, seen in school. The overall rates of attendance are influenced by the poor records of attendance among the pupils from the Traveller community. A significant minority of pupils attend infrequently. Overall attendance is variable between year groups and classes. Some classes had more than 50 per cent of the pupils missing from lessons during the inspection. The school's latest attendance summary for upper school reveals that only one third of the pupils on roll have attendance rates of 90 per cent or above. The attendance in the lower school is rarely above 90 per cent except in the higher-attaining group in Year 7 where attendance rates for the most recent half term are 94 per cent. There are indications that attendance rates are rising but, overall, the attendance remains very low and is a significant influence on pupils' achievement. Punctuality to school is not good but buses which bring the pupils in from considerable distances often arrive late.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

30. Teaching is good overall and makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning and overall achievement. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons, is good or better in 65 per cent of lessons and is very good or excellent in 22 per cent. Of the 148 lessons observed five were judged to be excellent and these were found in geography and performing arts. Very good teaching was found in English, mathematics, science, textiles, ICT, French, geography, history, art and design, performing arts, physical education and special educational needs. Five lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory and were found, one in each, in the following subjects, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, art and design and personal, social and health education. Unsatisfactory teaching was due to ineffective classroom control, and activities which lacked challenge and interest. Some of these lessons were taught by temporary teaching staff.

31. Teaching and pupils' learning are very good in performing arts in Years 10 and 11 and in physical education in Years 7 to 9. Pupils enjoy practical and creative subjects and tend to learn more readily in these subjects. Teaching is good in English, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, physical education and art and design in Years 10 and 11 and modern languages, music and performing arts in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory in modern languages in Years 10 and 11 and in mathematics and science throughout the school. Staffing difficulties, in mathematics especially and science to a lesser extent, have led to inconsistencies in teaching and learning for some classes.

32. In this school teaching has to be good overall in order to overcome the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils and ensure that the majority of pupils learn at a satisfactory rate. There is a significant minority of pupils who are not committed to learning, do not attend regularly and a few behave badly in lessons. Strong teaching usually manages to involve pupils in learning and manage unacceptable behaviour. Although learning may be slowed down at times there are just a small number of lessons when the pace of learning becomes unsatisfactory for all pupils.

33. An important strength of the teaching across subjects is the ability of most teachers to exercise good classroom control. Teachers do this by getting to know their pupils well and building up good relationships. Most teachers manage the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils skilfully and successfully. They establish a busy and productive atmosphere in lessons where a great deal is expected of pupils. In most lessons potentially disruptive pupils settle down well in response to firm and fair management. However, in a number of lessons, mainly in lower school, the behaviour of pupils falls below acceptable standards. In these lessons teachers' time is diverted from the main focus of the lesson, time is wasted and consequently learning and progress slow down. Teachers, including supply teachers, are not always able to draw on effective strategies to manage pupils' unacceptable behaviour.

34. Overall, teachers' planning is good. In most subjects teachers identify clear learning targets for each lesson and ensure pupils know what these are. In physical education lessons teachers make sure that they build on previously learnt practical skills and consequently pupils have a sense of achievement. In a Year 9 science lesson on solids, gases and liquids teaching and learning were particularly well planned. Learning was broken down into a series of small steps that the pupils could understand and they undertook a variety of activities at a good pace. The effect was to calm the pupils, focus them on their work and to build their confidence and self esteem as they recognised their success. In the best lessons teachers' planning takes account of the full range of learning needs and every pupil is challenged; however, this is not the case across all lessons.

35. In the best lessons teachers' infectious enthusiasm stands out and inspires pupils. In performing arts the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, her ability to capture pupils' imaginations and her high expectations result in lessons which are enjoyed by pupils and in which considerable learning and personal development take place. Teachers use a good variety of learning activities which challenge all pupils and consequently pupils learn at a good rate and sustain their interest and concentration. In history and geography group work is used very effectively. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson pupils worked well in groups to prioritise ideas which link the Cold War to Russia and the United States of America. In geography well organised role-play, group work and good questioning helped Year 8 pupils to think more deeply about the production of chocolate.

36. Other effective methods include the short "mental maths" activities at the start of mathematics lessons. These stimulate learning and pupils are involved and interested from the very start. The immediate feedback pupils receive from teachers in physical education lessons helps them to know how well they are doing and what to do to improve, consequently building up confidence and self esteem.

37. Teachers know their subjects well and how best to teach them. In history and geography teachers give clear explanations and introductions which set lessons off on a positive note and pupils pick up and understand key points quickly. Pupils gain confidence in the use of language when modern foreign language teachers conduct lessons at a level which matches pupils' knowledge and experience of the language.

38. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall. There is good practice across a range of subjects including English, design and technology and performing arts. In design and technology clear comments help pupils to identify what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. In ICT pupils benefit from a good system which teachers use to track pupils' progress and check their understanding frequently. As a result pupils make progress at a rate that matches their individual needs. However, marking is inconsistent in quality in mathematics and some work is not marked at all. Pupils are not aware of how well they have done and what to do to improve and they do not learn as much as they could. In geography, although work is marked regularly, it is not always marked in

sufficient detail to give useful guidance for improvement and sometimes there is praise for standards that are too low.

39. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The school has made a good start in improving pupils' literacy skills across the subjects of the curriculum. There is widespread good practice on teaching technical language, displaying key words in teaching areas and, in some subjects, using supporting structures to help pupils to write at length. However, the work needs to be continued particularly in offering more opportunities for pupils to write at length. There is a clear focus on teaching numeracy skills within mathematics lessons which is helping pupils to make progress. Although there is no policy in place to teach number through the subjects, in most lessons across the curriculum where number work is included it is matched to pupil's stages of understanding. ICT skills are taught well as part of discrete lessons. However, ICT skills are not taught well across the subjects because limited access to computers means there are too few opportunities for the use of ICT across the subjects.

40. Extra lessons and homework clubs in many subjects including English, mathematics and science have helped a significant number of pupils to learn and make progress. However, the attitude of many pupils to homework is poor and is one reason why learning is not as good as the teaching. Homework often helps to consolidate what pupils have learnt in lessons but does not make enough demand on pupils to carry out their own research.

41. Where teaching is not as strong the limited range of approaches taken and the lack of challenge leave some lessons feeling dull and uninteresting. Pupils are required to listen to instructions or explanations for too long. There are missed opportunities to encourage pupils to talk to each other or the whole class. In too many lessons tasks are not targeted to the needs of higher-attaining pupils, including gifted and talented pupils, nor to the needs of lower-attaining pupils. Consequently some pupils find work too easy and others find it too difficult.

42. Pupils' learning in the physical and practical areas is more rapid than in the more academic subjects. When they are well motivated many pupils show creative flair in subjects such as performing arts, art and design, physical education and design and technology and they are capable of reaching high standards. Pupils generally display more confidence in these subjects. However, pupils lack confidence in working on their own in subjects such as English, mathematics, and science. When group work is well planned and structured pupils respond well and they interact well, for example, in history and geography lessons.

43. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs within the learning support bases is good overall and around half is very good. The behaviour of pupils is well managed and this allows lessons to take place within a pleasant working atmosphere. The work is at the right level of difficulty based on an accurate assessment of need. Care is given to individuals and there are very good relationships between pupils and adults. This encourages pupils to want to learn and many carry on working at breaks and lunch times. Learning and behaviour support assistants are experienced, well trained and capable and provide good support for the pupils. They help sensitively, especially in the classrooms. For example, by Year 9 pupils start to feel embarrassed if someone sits with them; so the support assistant helps everyone in the class while keeping a watchful eye on the pupils with special educational needs.

44. The targets set in individual educational programmes are specific and detailed and allow teachers in the bases to plan work at the right level. Targets for good behaviour are precise and known to the pupils, who are given points at the end of each lesson according to how well they have behaved. However, the targets set by other departments are not always detailed enough and do not have targets specific to each subject. This results in pupils sometimes being given work that is too hard. For example, in a mathematics lesson on fractions one pupil did not know how to write a fraction, did not understand them and could not complete the work. Teachers work effectively with support assistants to ensure that pupils with special needs receive good individual guidance. When there is no additional support for pupils in lessons their progress is not as rapid.

45. The school provides very good support for pupils with English as an additional language, for asylum seekers and for pupils from Traveller families. This is a reflection of the school's commitment to inclusion. There is a clear focus on their individual learning requirements. Pupils with English as an additional language are given specialist support so that their transition into mainstream classes is as smooth as possible and the specialist teacher monitors their progress closely to ensure they make appropriate progress when they join mainstream classes. As a result these pupils make very good progress in learning English and satisfactory progress overall.

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

46. The curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, but within that judgement there are a range of strengths and weaknesses. A strength is the school's commitment to the inclusion of all pupils, no matter what their background or circumstances, in the educational and social opportunities it provides. The school takes effective action to ensure that all pupils have full access to the learning opportunities.

47. The school's literacy policy has been implemented successfully and is having a positive impact upon pupils' learning. It is important that the good work started in raising the standards of pupils' literacy is extended as it is a key element in supporting pupils' progress and raising standards overall. An effective numeracy policy is in place in mathematics but, as yet, has not been developed across subjects.

48. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 to 9 although in Year 9 some lessons are lost to the teaching of careers education. Around one third of pupils follow accredited courses in ICT in Years 10 and 11 and all pupils have ICT for a series of lessons each year as part of the arrangement for personal, social and health education. The statutory requirement to teach ICT across subjects is not met because, despite the very good provision of suites of computers, there are not enough computers available in subject areas and not all staff are fully competent in using ICT in their subject. Overall the provision of ICT for all pupils is not sufficient for them to reach national standards yet those pupils following accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards and achieve well.

49. The provision of careers and vocational education is good overall with very good features in careers education and guidance. The school has made a good start in providing vocational courses for pupils aged 14 to 16 years. The recently introduced "on-line" GNVQ in ICT is proving particularly successful and has justified the necessity to disapply pupils from design and technology. A GNVQ course in leisure and tourism has begun in Year 10. However, the school does not yet provide a wide enough range of vocational and non-

GCSE courses to meet the needs of all its pupils and to address the issues of low attendance and underachievement.

50. The very good careers and guidance programme beginning in Year 9 has a significant impact on improving pupils' attitudes towards their learning. This is linked both to the personal, social and health education course and to a very effective mentoring programme. Mentoring is extensive across the school and successful in creating positive attitudes and a clear sense of direction and purpose for many pupils. The mentoring of individuals by adults both within and outside the school is, in part, responsible for ensuring that 97 per cent of the pupils gained at least one GCSE in 2000. Pupils thought to be in danger of failing to cope with the mainstream curriculum are provided with mentors from the local community. This together with the introduction of a work-related curriculum for over twenty pupils in Years 10 and 11 is a helpful and effective strategy to support pupils and is valued highly by them.

51. Statutory requirements for music are not met in Years 7 to 9; pupils have very little exposure to music from other cultures; and pupils in Year 9 receive only half of their music lessons since the other half are devoted to dance. These factors have a negative impact on pupils' achievement despite some very good teaching within the subject.

52. The lack of drama in Years 7 to 9 is a concern because this is clearly an area in which pupils who take the GCSE performing arts course in this school achieve a great deal of success and benefit enormously in terms of their personal development. The arrangements for science in Years 10 and 11 are also unsatisfactory in that only around one quarter of pupils take dual award science. By taking the single award too many pupils are limiting the options open to them.

53. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities from which a good proportion of pupils benefit, especially in sport and performing arts. The school has recently been awarded the Sportsmark Award. The school provides pupils with many opportunities for further study and support in its summer and Easter courses, extra lessons and homework clubs outside the normal teaching day.

54. Personal, social and health education is taught as a discrete subject to all pupils. In addition to the very good careers education it includes an appropriate programme of health education, sex education and attention to drug misuse. It is taught effectively by an experienced and knowledgeable team of teachers and on the whole pupils appreciate and value the lessons.

55. The school provides very good support for pupils with English as an additional language and asylum seekers. They are given specialist support so that their transition into mainstream classes is as smooth as possible. The specialist teacher monitors their progress closely to ensure they make appropriate progress when they join mainstream classes. The school is committed to the inclusion of all pupils no matter what their background or circumstances.

56. The school has identified pupils who are gifted and talented as part of the Excellence in Cities initiative. A good range of extra activities is well co-ordinated and serves to stimulate pupils' interest, motivation and learning, for example a visit to the battlefields of France and a poetry reading in the local library for Year 8 pupils were appreciated by pupils. Plans are in place to ensure that these pupils' needs are met in day-to-day teaching and

learning but as yet there are too many lessons where higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

57. The curriculum builds effectively on links with primary schools, making the transition as easy as possible. Outside agencies, including the careers service and the Business Education Partnership make valuable contributions to pupils' learning; for example local businesses provide mentors and the careers advisor is very supportive of pupils, effectively guiding and supporting those who have the most need.

58. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. The learning support unit provides very good provision for pupils experiencing behavioural problems and in danger of exclusion from school. The aim is to re-integrate pupils into their classes and care is taken to ensure that pupils complete the same work as their peers. Learning mentors help to support the pupils as they are returned, gradually, to their classes. It has been successful in reducing the number of exclusions.

59. The learning support base provides very effective provision for pupils with learning difficulties. As well as the help during lessons, support is available before school starts and at breaks and lunch times within a caring and supportive atmosphere. This is helping to raise standards. It also provides a 'refuge' for pupils experiencing difficulties in their classrooms. For example two pupils who were disrupting their French class and not working brought their work to the base. They worked well throughout the lesson with the help of a learning support assistant and completed it with effort and care. Very good use is made of ICT and all pupils have individual programs on the computer that they enjoy using.

60. Both learning support bases make a very good contribution to the pupils' personal development. They help pupils understand why rules are important and how to work together successfully. Pupils learn to work independently, to co-operate with others and to consider others' needs. Adults provide very good role models for pupils and they discuss problems with them, helping them to understand the impact of their behaviour on others.

61. The provision for pupils from Traveller families is good. They are made to feel welcome in school and receive support from the Manchester Traveller Education Service in English, mathematics and science lessons for two weeks before an initial assessment is made of their needs. The school tries hard to meet these needs, either by providing additional support or individual programmes to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills. Presently the education service is working with the teachers in school during personal, social and health education lessons to help break down any prejudice or barriers to their full acceptance into school. For pupils from Traveller families from abroad the school provides an assessment in their first language and, where possible, teaching and support by first language speakers. For example, two Czech pupils are making very good progress working for part of the week with a Czech speaker. The school works hard, and with some success, to keep the pupils in school and presently there are 15 pupils in Years 10 and 11.

62. The overall provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Although there is no separate written policy for this aspect of education the school has a mission statement which permeates all its activities. The mission statement, which has its basis in Christ's teaching, Gospel values and a community of love, is clearly designed to be at the heart of school. The school tries to cater for the whole child in body, mind and spirit.

63. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is good. The Christian ethos that characterises the school is promoted not only through the religious education provided but also through the liturgies, prayers and opportunities to worship presented in assemblies and, with some varying effect, in form groups. It is supported by the pastoral provision and by the work of the local clergy, several of whom sit on the governing body. These clergy visit the school regularly to celebrate Mass or to undertake pastoral roles. The pupils are voluntarily involved in prayer, reflection, worship, pilgrimages and retreat experiences. This is clear evidence of the school living out its spiritual aims.

64. The evidence of spiritual dimensions to the work of the subject departments is variable and in some cases not discernible but several subjects offer pupils good opportunities to reflect upon non-material aspects of life and upon moral issues. Examples can be found in the music, English and history departments. The trip to battlefields of the First World War afforded pupils the spiritual experience of finding the graves of family members and laying wreaths in their memory.

65. The provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. The school has a strong sense of moral purpose which underlies its activities and expectations. There is an agreed code of conduct and most pupils know the difference between right and wrong and they learn about moral responsibility in religious education, personal, social and health education lessons and elsewhere. There is impressive evidence of a caring and compassionate approach even to serious disciplinary problems. The same caring approach is evident in the learning support bases. In religious education pupils explore moral issues of the present day. Other subjects such as geography, history, literature and drama offer opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues in such topics as care of the environment, the causes and effects of wars, and the holocaust. The behaviour of a minority of pupils in lessons and around the school falls short of the school's accepted code suggesting that some pupils have not developed the self-discipline nor the understanding of what is acceptable behaviour.

66. The provision for pupils' social development is good. The school is a harmonious community of Faith within a wider community to which it relates through parish links and various local initiatives. The pupils are generally friendly and respectful to each other and visitors. The school provides them with a range of experiences that helps them to acquire social knowledge, skills and confidence. Social concern is seen in pupils' extensive work for charities and good causes such as the Catholic Children's Rescue Society and by the care they give to the sick on the pilgrimage to Lourdes. Musicians have links with a local school and make visits to Henesy House for the Deaf. In personal, social and health education lessons there are contributions to self esteem, social skills, careers, health, drugs, moral responsibility and citizenship within the framework of the mission statement. History lessons also make a good contribution to citizenship. Staff make good role models and help to make the school a caring and compassionate community. The system of mentoring by staff in the school and adults from the community has been very beneficial to pupils.

67. There are good links with the local parishes and with the world of business and work. Older pupils benefit from very good careers advice and work experience. Pupils have the opportunity to benefit from residential experiences in the form of visits and retreats. Many pupils benefit from involvement in extra-curricular sport. Sport is a strength of the school not just because of the successes achieved but also because of its role in helping to integrate pupils at an important time in its development. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility for their own learning in lessons or to take on wider responsibilities within the school.

68. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The performance of "Caliban" as part of the Manchester Arts Festival, with a multi-racial cast of around 20 pupils and its serious message about the impact of one culture and religion upon another, was impressive. It provided confirmation, not just of the strength of performance arts, but also of the school's harmonious relationships. Pupils are introduced to Christianity and other world religions in religious education lessons. The parent/staff international evening included contributions from the Polish, Irish, Ukrainian and Chinese. Pupils learn about other musical traditions and European influences on art and design. Pupils benefit from a visiting artist and other visitors. In geography lessons pupils study the different life styles in countries and regions across the world. In design and technology pupils experience multi-cultural dimensions in relation to food, textiles and artefacts. History and modern foreign languages lessons give further opportunities to study cultural similarities and differences but there are some missed opportunities for teaching about the modern culture of technology and science and no evidence of the cultural or multi-cultural dimension in mathematics. The school has not yet established links with overseas establishments for cultural exchanges. There are not enough opportunities to explore music from different cultures within the music curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

69. The school's care for its pupils is satisfactory overall with a number of notable strengths. Form tutors and heads of year work together well to ensure that a good level of personal and educational support and guidance is given to all pupils. Teachers know the pupils well. Personal development is monitored and detailed records are kept in pupils' record of achievement files. The school is a secure place where most pupils establish trustful and constructive relationships with adults and with classmates. The response of the majority of parents to the questionnaire shows that they agree that their children like to come to school. Form teachers make it a priority to ensure pupils settle in well to school, beginning with effective pre-school meetings between teachers and parents. There are good procedures for the introduction of pupils to the upper school. The head of Year 10 visits the lower school and talks to the pupils who are then invited to the induction meetings in the upper school.

70. Good attention is paid to pupils' educational and emotional needs. Appropriate support is provided in the learning support unit, which is funded through the Excellence in Cities initiative. Form tutors target pupils at risk of exclusion for behavioural difficulties and those who are disengaged from studies and refer them to the unit. Here they not only continue to be taught their class work but they also receive counselling and mentoring for a specified period before returning to their normal classes.

71. The school works closely with families regarding pupils' welfare. The school complies with the locally agreed child protection procedures. They provide clear instructions about action to be taken and agreed procedures where other agencies are involved. Teaching, ancillary and dining hall staff are alert to child protection issues and there are properly qualified and nominated responsible persons who have received appropriate training. There are satisfactory arrangements for first aid and the staff is aware of the procedures in case of an emergency. Sick children receive good medical attention from staff trained in first-aid in strategically located waiting areas in both schools. The school nurse visits the school on a regular basis and provides guidance on personal and health matters.

72. The health and welfare procedures are clearly documented in the school's health and safety policy, which has been adopted by the governing body. Regular checks are made on the safety of the buildings, grounds and equipment. There are formal records for the inspection of fire fighting equipment. Fire drills are regularly undertaken and properly recorded by the school. The inspectors drew some minor health and safety matters to the attention of the caretaker in the lower school. Risk assessments have been carried out. The school

promotes health and hygiene effectively as part of the curriculum through personal, social and health education.

73. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. There is some absence and lateness condoned by parents which the school is tackling. The school is required to keep pupils who are absent long-term on the register until the local education authority notifies them. This distorts the school's attendance rates. The school maintains good contact with the education welfare officer who visits the school regularly and follows up unexplained absences. The school monitors individual pupil and class attendance closely, and rewards good attendance. The school has recently appointed two full-time staff to monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality. There are indications that this is having positive effects, but overall attendance remains very low in comparison with the national average and is only improving slowly. A minority of pupils arrive late to school regularly, this is sometimes due to buses that are late. The location of the upper and lower schools means that some pupils have to travel long distances across the city.

74. The school promotes good behaviour satisfactorily through a mutually agreed code of conduct and a system of rewards and sanctions. Most pupils know that good behaviour is expected of them, but a minority of pupils chooses to ignore the commonly accepted rules and act in an unacceptable manner in lessons and around the school. In most cases teachers manage poor behaviour skilfully. However, some teachers, often but not always those teaching on a temporary basis, are not able to draw on the school's procedures to manage the unacceptable behaviour of these pupils effectively. Systems of rewards and sanctions do not provide sufficient incentive to these pupils to behave well and follow the school's code of conduct. As a consequence lessons are disturbed and pupils' learning and progress is held back.

75. The schools' approach to eliminating oppressive behaviour is "zero tolerance" and pupils are aware of the procedures to follow. Pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds are taught to respect one another within the overall ethos of the school and through activities carried out in school assemblies and in personal, social and health education lessons. The school deals with incidents of oppressive behaviour rapidly and effectively and deputy heads maintain proper records.

76. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are effective in most subjects and in science and design and technology are good. In the best practice pupils know the criteria against which they are being assessed and these are clearly linked to National Curriculum levels or GCSE criteria. Exercise books are marked frequently with supportive comments and corrections. In science, teachers make very good use of pupil self-evaluation sheets and topic check lists. In most subjects assessment takes place regularly and pupils know how well they are doing and what to do to improve. Where procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory, as in music and art and design in Years 7 to 9, there is no common approach taken to assessment or common view on standards and hence there are inconsistencies in the marks awarded. In music the statutory requirement to report the standards pupils reach at age 14 is not met. The school's assessment policy is in draft form and is in the early stages of implementation. It's effectiveness has not yet been evaluated.

77. Following the recent appointment of an assessment co-ordinator procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' progress across the school have been established. The school uses standardised tests as well as results of national assessments taken at the ages 11 and 14 to identify the potential of individual pupils to achieve GCSE passes. Assessment information, provided by every subject, adds to each pupils' overall profile. This comprehensive information is shared with teachers but they are not yet familiar with how to make the best use of it. The use of ICT to establish common procedures for recording and to support staff in making the best use of the assessment information are currently being explored with the help of an outside consultant.

78. The use of assessment to inform curricular planning is unsatisfactory overall. The school has made a start on using assessment information purposefully. Subjects are analysing examination results and from their analyses are identifying areas for improvement. For example, English, mathematics and science all identify the need to raise the attainment of boys and mathematics also identify the need to raise the attainment of boys from ethnic minority groups. Not all subjects are analysing results closely enough to be able to identify groups of pupils who are underachieving. From the age of 14 individual pupils are identified if underachieving, their progress is monitored and they are often provided with a mentor. This has a positive effect on their achievement. In English and science, testing is used well to set pupils appropriate work. In design and technology, modules of work are changed to meet the needs of pupils who do not have appropriate skills or basic knowledge.

79. Many departments do not analyse assessment information about pupils sufficiently well to enable teachers to plan activities to match individual and group needs. Consequently in some subjects although gifted and talented pupils and pupils with special educational needs are identified, the work is not always targeted to their learning needs. For example in some mathematics lessons pupils all do the same work. Lower-attaining pupils find the work difficult and higher-attaining pupils find it too easy and make little progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

80. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by their children. They consider that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best and that most pupils make progress. They appreciate the homework clubs provided by the school. They recognise an improvement in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils since the school opened. Parents confirm that the school provides very good support for those who are at risk of exclusion and for pupils with special educational needs. Inspectors agree with these positive views.

81. The pre-inspection meeting was attended by 16 parents and over 15 per cent of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire. A small number of parents were interviewed during the inspection. A significant proportion of parents were highly resistant to the establishment of the new school and it is possible that these views have had an influence of the overall parental response to the inspection questionnaires.

82. A significant proportion of parents responding to the questionnaires expressed some concern about the amount of homework pupils are given; the quality of the teaching; the way the school works with the parents; the information they receive about their child's progress; the leadership and management of the school; and the way in which the school deals with incidents of oppressive behaviour. Inspectors have no overall concern about any of the above issues. The inspection team found that the amount of homework is usually adequate but some pupils have a poor attitude towards homework and do not take it seriously. A number of parents appreciate the homework clubs set up by the school which help pupils to take a positive approach to their studies. The inspection finds the quality of teaching to be good

overall although inspectors share parents' concerns about teaching in classes where there has been a high rate of staff absence.

83. The quality of information parents receive about their children's progress is considered by inspectors to be satisfactory although in some annual reports it is necessary to make it clearer to pupils what they have to do to improve. The overall leadership and management of the school is judged by inspectors to be good. The inspectors recognise parents' concern about incidents of bullying. However, inspectors consider that the school deals with incidents of oppressive behaviour promptly and effectively and that pupils know who to turn to and what to do if they are aware of such incidents. Inspectors share parents' concerns about the behaviour of some pupils and teaching in some classes where there has been a high rate of staff absence. In some lessons teachers do not draw on effective strategies to manage pupils' unacceptable behaviour.

84. The school makes strong and persistent efforts to maintain a good partnership with parents. The interim and annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory. Whilst the information on what pupils have achieved is satisfactory, information about what pupils need to do to improve is not precise enough in some subjects. The school prospectus and governing body's annual report are concise and easy to read. The school publishes regular newsletters, which contain useful information, and a calendar for other activities. There are strategically placed notice boards for parents to consult. Formal meetings are held with parents before their child is referred to the learning support unit. This enables them to share information about children's attitudes to learning and the progress made. Some parents have signed the home-school agreement.

85. The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. The school encourages parents to take part in their children's learning and offers courses, such as the family literacy courses. There are good procedures for pupils arriving new to the school. At an introductory meeting, the school tries to establish mutual expectations shared with parents regarding attendance, behaviour and support for special educational needs.

86. A small number of parents support the Parent Staff Association which organises social functions that raise money, for example, to support pupils on school outings. The international evening was enjoyed and appreciated by the parents and the staff. However, the majority of parents, including parents from ethnic minority communities, have limited involvement in the day-to-day life of the school. Few parents use the homework diaries to communicate with their children's tutors.

87. The special educational needs teachers maintain good links with parents who are informed as soon as a pupil is identified as needing extra help. The targets set and the progress pupils are making are discussed regularly with parents. They are invited to the annual review meetings and their views are considered and recorded. Before pupils are admitted to the learning support unit parents are interviewed and sign a contract to support the work of the school. They are kept well informed of the progress being made as well as any problems. Pupils make the best progress when they are well supported by their parents. For example one pupil who is brought to the class every morning and collected each afternoon is making very good progress and her attendance is now good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

88. The overall leadership and management of the school is good. The head teacher, supported ably by the three deputy heads and key staff, has given the school very clear and purposeful direction in its early years as a new school. They have overcome many of the difficulties associated with closing three schools and opening up a new school on two sites within a short period of around six months. Throughout this period of change the head and senior managers have constantly sought to achieve high educational standards and to create a positive ethos. They have maintained a common sense of purpose across the school and have identified the right priorities for the whole school to develop and improve. These priorities have been driven forward by effective managers who drew up action plans and implemented them from the early days of the school's life. Very good leadership and management by heads of English, mathematics, and physical education and good management by heads of science, ICT, history, geography, performing arts, learning support, special educational needs and year groups is helping the school to improve in important areas. There is a strong commitment to improvement across the school. The capacity to succeed is evident in the quality of the management and in the overall quality of the teaching.

89. The headteacher has held a clear focus on improving the quality of the staffing and teaching within the constraints of re-organisation. He has taken some hard decisions relating to staffing and made some good new appointments to key positions, for example the head of mathematics. A further important priority has been, and still is, the provision of good ICT equipment. Pupils now benefit from access to computers in discrete ICT courses and a new "on-line" GNVQ course in ICT has brought significant success and achievement to Year 10 pupils. The need to improve the attendance of a significant minority of pupils is a major priority. Much of the work carried out on mentoring, inclusion, and improvements to teaching and learning is aimed at ensuring pupils maintain and improve patterns of attendance. Throughout this period of change the head and senior managers continue to plan for the longer term future of the school, when it moves to a single site and into a new building, without becoming diverted from the needs of the pupils in the school at present.

90. The school's mission statement reflects a community founded on mutual love and care for the individual in which the Faith of the Church underpins all their activities. This mission is reflected in work across the school. For example, in the school's strong commitment to caring for and supporting individual pupils no matter what their background or circumstances; in the work of the learning support unit which aims to keep pupils in school and learning rather than exclude them; and in the personal support and academic mentoring which encourage pupils' personal development and academic achievement. The school is succeeding in creating a caring, supportive ethos with high expectations of pupils. Teachers and pastoral staff in particular, have supported pupils well as they have undergone a period of great change in their school lives. The school has helped pupils to settle in to a new school, with new peers and teachers, and for many in a building at a considerable distance from where they live.

91. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the co-ordinator of inclusive education lead and manage their departments very effectively. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that the pupils receive the support they need to learn effectively. There has been improvement since the school opened in September 1999 when there was very little provision in place. Both co-ordinators continually review what is provided and have suitable action plans to develop further, according to the needs of the school. All funding is well used to provide staffing and resources for the pupils.

92. The governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and play a full part in making decisions. They made a brave decision to re-open the new school on two sites prior to the building of a new school. They are prepared to make sure that the school is successful and serves the needs of the local community. Many governors are involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Some governors act as mentors to individual pupils. The vice-chair of governors celebrated Mass in school each week during Lent. Some governors work closely with pupils at risk of exclusion and their families to ensure their welfare and continuing involvement in the education the school provides. Some of the statutory duties expected of governors are not fulfilled. The statutory curriculum is not in place for music in Years 7 to 9 nor for the teaching of ICT across subjects.

93. The school's evaluation of its performance is satisfactory overall. Through a process of monitoring, which includes the observation of lessons, the head teacher has identified and provided additional support for a number of teachers resulting in improvements in teaching and learning. More extensive monitoring of teaching by other managers in the school has started recently. The English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages departments are working on self-evaluation procedures which include the analysis of performance and observation of teaching. The impact of this work is evident in their own subjects but is not yet widespread across the school. Most subjects analyse the GCSE results and identify areas for improvement but the depth of analysis is variable. Some subjects reveal differences in performance between girls and boys and some between pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Further analysis of pupils' results and progress needs to take place to help the school identify how well the many different groups of pupils in the school are achieving and where additional support is required.

94. The school's policy for performance management is in place. It is clearly focused on the school's priorities and all teachers have established targets for development. The policy is in the early stages of implementation and has not yet had time to have a significant impact on improving teaching and learning overall.

95. The managers of the school deserve credit for securing a range of additional funding, for example through the Education Action Zone and the Excellence in Cities initiative. Extra funding provides important facilities and resources which include the learning support unit, the homework clubs, an attendance officer, extra activities for gifted and talented pupils, mentors for pupils and, most recently, laptop computers for staff. All these resources contribute significantly to the quality of the education pupils receive and the progress they make. Outside agencies frequently visit the school to assess how well funding is used and their evaluations match in well with the approaches taken across the school to evaluate performance.

96. The finances of the school are managed well. Financial control is good. The transfer from three school budgets to one was handled smoothly. Financial planning is good and supports educational priorities as identified in the school improvement plan. Principles of best value are applied satisfactorily in the management of the school's resources. The school is in the process of developing the use of computers to support assessment procedures. The school's use of new technology is not yet satisfactory.

97. Teachers are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach. Although staffing levels are adequate, high levels of staff absence in mathematics and science have led to inconsistencies in teaching which have had a negative effect on pupils' learning and motivation. The situation is improving rapidly as the staffing becomes more stable and some good new appointments are made. The school has a good number of well qualified and effective learning support and technical support staff. Pupils with many different special needs, not necessarily learning needs, benefit from the additional support provided in

lessons. Staff development is linked to the school's priorities and additional support is given to match individual teacher's needs. One of the school's priorities for in-service training is, correctly, to improve the ICT skills of staff.

98. The provision for ICT, and computers in particular, is unsatisfactory but improving. Spacious computer suites provide good learning bases for ICT lessons and, more recently, laptops have been provided for staff. However, there are not enough computers across the subject areas in the school to ensure adequate access to them. Consequently the statutory requirement to use ICT across the subjects of the curriculum is not met. Library provision is inadequate. The two small libraries are not used as centres for the development of pupils' learning. The majority of the books are old and came from the reorganised schools.

99. The new school inherited buildings on two sites, which provide enough space to teach the subjects of the curriculum. Since the school opened, accommodation for ICT, science, physical education and learning support has improved substantially. However, there is very limited space in which to practise music in the lower school and noise from a nearby design and technology room make listening and speaking difficult in a modern languages room in upper school.

100. The two sites are around 15 minutes drive apart. This presents many difficulties for members of staff and is a drain on their time and energy. Despite the difficulties the school manages the split-site well; for example senior members of staff ensure that daily communication is duplicated on both sites, and movement of teachers between the sites is minimised. However, there are some teachers who are required to move at break-times and they inevitably do not arrive at lessons as well prepared as they would be without the 15-minute drive. The split-site is a short-term arrangement whilst the school looks forward to moving on to one site and into a new building. This makes decisions about the maintenance and improvement of the present buildings difficult. Despite the recent improvements and some well maintained areas which use bright and lively display to enhance the surroundings, there are some areas of the present buildings that are shabby and in need of refurbishment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

101. In order to improve the standards achieved and the quality of the education provided the headteacher, staff and governors should take the following measures:

- (1) Raise standards by:
 - continuing the good work started on improving standards of pupils' literacy across the curriculum;
 - raising the achievement of pupils in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11;
 - securing a stable staff in mathematics and science;
 - modelling all teaching and learning on the best practice in the school;
 - ensuring that work is planned to match the needs of all pupils, both lower-attaining pupils and higher-attaining, including those identified as gifted and talented;
 - continuing to increase pupils' commitment to homework;
 - developing in pupils the confidence to carry out their own research and study independently;
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to practise speaking and listening in modern foreign languages;
 - improving access to and the use of ICT across subjects;
 - ensuring that pupils' progress is tracked and monitored in order to set targets for pupils and for teachers to measure their own effectiveness.

(Paragraphs: 2, 3, 5-11, 13-16, 20, 26, 29-31, 39, 40-42, 47, 48, 51, 56, 77-79, 82, 93, 96-98, 102-105, 107, 109-113, 115-119, 121-126, 128, 130, 131, 139, 145, 144-146, 148, 149, 151, 153-155, 159, 160, 162, 169, 176-178, 181, 184-186, 192)
- (2) Improve the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all teachers, especially teachers covering for absent colleagues, can draw on clear and effective strategies for managing and improving pupil behaviour;
 - extending systems for rewarding the good behaviour and the positive attitudes of pupils.

(Paragraphs: 13, 21-25, 32, 33, 65, 74, 83, 107, 117, 118, 128, 129, 139, 150, 158, 173)
- (3) Increase the rates of attendance of pupils by:
 - providing a broader range of relevant courses in Years 10 and 11 to include a greater choice of vocational opportunities;
 - continuing to monitor, support and develop teaching across the school and match the pace, challenge and interest of the best lessons in order to make school a place more pupils want to be.

(Paragraphs: 13, 29, 49, 73, 89, 110, 114, 118, 126, 148, 152, 156, 165, 198, 209)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	148
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	19	43	32	3	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	852
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	453

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	160

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	72

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	65
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	80

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	15.5
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	2.7
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
	2000	99	95	194

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	21	29	24
	Girls	31	28	21
	Total	52	57	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	27 (N/A)	30 (N/A)	23 (N/A)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	5 (N/A)	13 (N/A)	6 (N/A)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	26	32	39
	Girls	42	27	34
	Total	68	59	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	38 (N/A)	33 (N/A)	41 (N/A)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (N/A)	14 (N/A)	10 (N/A)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	89	72	161

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	10	66	84
	Girls	20	58	72
	Total	30	124	156
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	19 (N/A)	77 (N/A)	97 (N/A)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (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	23.8 (N/A)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	24
	National	
		37.5
		N/A

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	16
Black – African heritage	26
Black – other	71
Indian	5
Pakistani	13
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	11
White	671
Any other minority ethnic group	38

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	7	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	37	1
Other minority ethnic groups	13	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	62.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	589

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68.7
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	18.8
Key Stage 4	21.7

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 825 841
Total expenditure	1 773 554
Expenditure per pupil	1 920
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	52 287

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	852
Number of questionnaires returned	134

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	36	15	7	2
My child is making good progress in school.	36	48	11	4	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	34	19	6	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	34	22	13	1
The teaching is good.	31	44	13	7	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	38	16	12	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	33	10	7	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	37	4	1	5
The school works closely with parents.	23	37	20	13	7
The school is well led and managed.	25	37	16	8	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	44	15	5	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	34	9	10	18

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

ENGLISH

102. Results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests for pupils at age 14 were well below national averages and below those achieved by schools with a similar intake of pupils. These results were a little higher than those achieved in mathematics and science. Girls outperformed boys but the gap between them is not as wide as that found nationally. The 2000 GCSE results for English and English literature were well below the average for all schools. However, when set against similar schools pupils' results in English were average and higher than their results in most other subjects. Girls continue to outperform boys.

103. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average. At the age of 14 many pupils are hesitant and lack confidence when speaking for purposes other than social conversation. Vocabulary and range of expression are often limited. Class discussions are usually limited to short responses and there are few examples of pupils linking sentences. When asked to work together in groups pupils frequently struggle to make good progress and often need the class teacher's support. Reading too is less well developed than might be expected for pupils of this age. Many pupils cannot be relied upon to complete reading homework and the school library does not lend out books at customary secondary school levels. Nevertheless most pupils are comfortable when reading aloud, no matter what their attainment levels, and they are able to extract information from a variety of sources. Pupils produce work that is carefully written and well presented but levels of accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation are below average. Pupils of all attainment levels have difficulty in writing at length with good expression.

104. By the age of 16 pupils have gained more confidence in their oral work as seen when Year 11 pupils discussed aspects of persuasive writing freely in small groups. However, when feeding back their thoughts to the whole class pupils could only offer the briefest of summaries. At this age, pupils read literature and non-fiction texts with sound understanding and they are generally able to identify some of the devices which writers use to achieve particular effects. They respond particularly well to powerful twentieth century stories such as John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'. All pupils make use of ICT skills to prepare and present their GCSE coursework. The evidence of drafting and re-drafting to improve the quality of written work is less wide spread than usual. Higher-attaining pupils produce very good examples of imaginative writing but weaknesses of expression are still to be found.

105. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards and achieve steadily throughout Years 7 to 9. This represents satisfactory achievement over these three years. Estimates for this year's tests indicate significant levels of improvement and standards of work seen reflect this improvement. Pupils with special educational needs, those identified as gifted and talented and those from ethnic minority groups make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils with special needs working in small literacy groups often make good progress. However, lower-attaining pupils in middle sets do not receive sufficient additional support for them to make similar progress. Additional activities for gifted and talented pupils, such as a poetry reading in the local library for Year 8, support their progress. Low attendance is also a significant factor in slowing the progress of many pupils, including those from Traveller families, in all years. Although standards in GCSE examinations are low, taking into account the well below average starting point of these pupils their achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Estimated grades for current Year 11 pupils indicate that results for 2001 may well show improvement and the work seen during the inspection reflects these grades.

106. Teaching is good across all years. In just over a quarter of lessons observed teaching

was judged to be satisfactory; in almost half it was good and in just under a quarter it was very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject and how to teach it is good and consequently pupils deepen their understanding through involvement in a good range of activities. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the teacher manages class discussion skilfully to help pupils tease out the hidden and underlying meanings of John Agard's poem "Half-caste". Teachers generally manage pupils very well. Relationships are strong and for the most part pupils respond positively to good teaching. Teachers plan lessons carefully with a balance of activities pitched to keep pupils interested, as seen when lower-attaining Year 10 pupils were working on the presentational devices used by writers to back up an argument. The class teacher had carefully prepared support sheets and white-board notes and consequently pupils moved forward with confidence through each stage of the lesson.

107. In other less effective lessons teachers occasionally miss good opportunities for valuable oral work or overlook the needs of the higher-attaining pupils in a class. Teachers generally manage challenging pupils skilfully and the behaviour and attitudes of most pupils are satisfactory. However, the attitude and behaviour of a small number of pupils sometimes fall below acceptable standards, and this affects the learning of other pupils in some lessons. Levels of attendance are low and some older pupils do not carry out homework tasks conscientiously. For these reasons pupils' learning does not match the good teaching in Years 10 and 11 and pupils' learning is satisfactory rather than good. The recent amalgamation of three schools and the split-site are further factors adversely affecting pupils' learning.

108. A dynamic and innovative head of department gives strong leadership with a clear educational vision. All teachers of English share a commitment to the raising of standards and work very hard to bring this about. They contribute to a wide range of literacy initiatives, including additional classes, primary school links and summer schools. They provide extra classes and opportunities for higher-attaining pupils, including pupils identified as gifted and talented. For example, additional media studies lessons are available to Year 8 and Year 10 pupils. Since the school opened good progress has been made in raising reading standards of lower-attaining pupils and in improving general classroom behaviour. The school library provision is very limited and offers little opportunity for pupils to develop supported self-study skills. This is a strong and improving department.

109. Across the curriculum low levels of literacy hinder pupils' progress in many subjects. This problem has been recognised by the school and a whole school policy devised to improve standards of literacy. A literacy co-ordinator has already organised several important initiatives arising from this policy, such as work on teaching technical language and the use of supporting structures to help pupils to write at length. However, at present there are only limited opportunities for writing in mathematics, science, ICT, modern foreign languages and art and design. A better range of writing is evident in history, physical education and design and technology. In many areas there is much reliance upon worksheets requiring only short answers. Pupils' reading skills meet the demands of most subjects, although lower attaining pupils in design and technology on occasions struggle to read materials provided. In ICT pupils cope well with reading complicated information sheets. In science, where pupils are encouraged to read aloud, some worksheets are a little too simple for higher-attaining pupils. There is widespread good practice on displaying key

words in teaching areas and in subjects such as art and design, history, ICT and modern foreign languages departmental policies address the teaching of literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

110. The mathematics department has experienced severe disruption since the opening of the new school. This has included long-term staff absences and pupils having a series of temporary and supply teachers. Additionally, attendance is poor and some classes have had over a third of pupils absent at any one time. As a result some pupils underachieve. The new head of department is having a positive effect on practice across the department. This should ensure a period of stability and the opportunity to raise standards.

111. Results of national tests taken by pupils aged 14 in 2000 are very low when compared to all schools and are below average compared to schools with a similar intake of pupils. Girls perform slightly better than boys. At age 16 pupils' results in GCSE are well below average compared to all schools. When compared to similar schools the proportion of pupils achieving higher grades is average. The performance of boys is slightly better than that of girls. When compared with most of their other subjects, pupils achieved better grades in mathematics. Girls from ethnic minority groups achieve better grades than other girls in the school but boys from ethnic minority groups do not do as well as other boys.

112. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards reached by pupils aged 14 are well below average. There is some improvement in the performance of the average and above pupils when compared to the 2000 examination results. Their number skills are improving as a result of a mental mathematics activity which is used at the start of several lessons. Higher-attaining pupils can use numbers confidently. They use decimals and percentages to solve problems. They develop their skills in shape and space, calculating area and volume and looking at the properties of shapes. Some lower-attaining pupils are insecure in their understanding of number and are not sure of the values of numbers in decimals. In a lesson on percentages, some lower-attaining pupils were unclear about what percentages were. Pupils are improving their ability to gather information, organise this in tables and draw graphs of the results. However, in a significant number of lessons, work is not targeted at the needs of both lower and higher-attaining pupils and slows down their progress. Consequently the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

113. Standards of the work seen of pupils aged 16 are well below average. However, they are making clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Taking into account the low starting point of these pupils their achievement is satisfactory overall. By age 16 pupils show good understanding of number and are developing their skills with algebra. Higher-attaining pupils draw complex graphs and solve equations competently. Lower-attaining pupils gain confidence with number and understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. Pupils gather information, draw a variety of graphs and comment on what they show. They develop understanding of shape and find areas and volumes of increasingly complex shapes. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. However, the work of some boys in particular is careless, untidy and badly presented.

114. The head of department and staff have worked hard to improve results. This includes taking groups of pupils after school. As a result, some pupils are making good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language, from ethnic minority groups and Travellers make satisfactory progress in most lessons. However, some boys from ethnic minority groups underachieve and the attendance, particularly of children from Traveller families, is poor and as a result, their achievement is inconsistent. Where they attend, their achievement is satisfactory.

115. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress. In some lessons, work meets their needs. However, in many lessons, work is not targeted at their level. Assessment is not used effectively to find out what they know, can do and understand, in order to plan appropriate work. Mathematical language development is not planned and short-term targets are not set. Assessment is not used effectively to monitor their attainment and progress towards targets.

116. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In almost half the lessons teaching is good or better. Teaching was very good in two lessons and unsatisfactory in one Year 8 lesson. Where teaching is effective, lessons begin with a short mental activity to develop mental skills; teachers' planning is detailed and the work meets the needs of the range of attainment in the class. Pupils are well supported to ensure that they understand the work, are kept focused on the task and learning is effective. In the best teaching computers are used to enhance lessons. Pupils work in groups and improve their understanding through talking about their work. Marking is thorough and teachers make useful comments on ways to improve both their mathematics and the neatness of their work.

117. Where lessons are not so good, work is not planned to cover the range of attainment in the class. Lower-attaining pupils find the work difficult and higher-attaining pupils find the work easy and they do not develop their skills. In these lessons both of these groups make little progress. Pupils who are not working or who have a poor attitude are not encouraged to make a better effort. Marking is inconsistent and some work is not marked. In many books careless and untidy work, lack of working out and missed pages escape comment. As a result, these pupils do not achieve as well as they might. In most lessons, assessment is not used to monitor the attainment and progress of individuals and groups of pupils, though plans are in place to tackle this. In many lessons there is little use of computers to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

118. In a significant number of lessons, the attitude and behaviour of some pupils is at best only satisfactory. This undermines the good teaching observed and as a result, learning in these lessons is not as good as could be expected. Some pupils lack motivation, are not keen to work and make only the minimum of effort in lessons. They do not take care with their work and disregard comments in their books on ways to improve. As a result, they do not make the progress expected. However, the attitudes and behaviour of pupils are improving and they are better among older pupils. This is seen in the improvement in the standards of work and in teachers' assessments of pupils at age 14 and at 16. In many lessons, attendance is poor, with almost a third of the class absent at any one time. This seriously disrupts progress and makes teaching difficult when there are few lessons where the same pupils attend.

119. The management of the department is very good. In the short time since the head of department was appointed significant improvements have been made. Although policies and schemes of work are thorough, because they are new, they have not yet had time to impact fully on teaching and learning. Assessment details are being gathered but they are not yet used as a basis to identify areas of weakness and modify teaching programmes. The head of department has several roles in the school which draw on her time and energy. Additionally travelling to each site takes time away from staff which could be used for lesson planning and preparation. The head of department has effectively monitored the quality of teaching and learning and has identified areas for development. Systems are in place to address issues and to raise standards and the capacity to improve under her leadership is good.

120. Pupil's knowledge, skills and understanding in number are satisfactory. The mathematics department has a numeracy policy and lessons are planned to develop pupils' skills with number mentally, orally and in writing and to use calculators accurately where

appropriate. Their standards of attainment are low but improving as a result of this policy. In lessons, lack of number skills does not impede progress. Number work is matched to pupils' stages of understanding. Pupils measure and calculate accurately, carry out surveys and present information in tables and draw graphs and comment on what they show. Pupils apply their skills in subjects such as science, geography, ICT and design and technology. For example, in geography they measure distances, heights, temperatures and rainfall. In ICT they use spreadsheets to carry out calculations. In science they use their understanding of line graphs by drawing them and commenting on what they show. In design and technology they use accurate measuring techniques in their designing, planning and making activities.

SCIENCE

121. In 2000, results in tests at the end of Year 9 were very low compared with all schools and below average compared to similar schools. Teachers' assessment of pupils' standards at this stage were higher but still well below average. Teachers' assessments may be closer to pupils' actual attainment as they are based on tests over a shorter period and are not, therefore, so dependent on the build up of knowledge, or pupils' regular attendance, over a long period. Results were lower than those in English and mathematics.

122. GCSE results are difficult to compare closely with national figures because at least half the pupils take the single science award, while in most schools, all pupils take the double award. In both single and double award the results were well below average for all schools. However, a few pupils did achieve the higher grades of A and B and the proportion of pupils achieving higher grades is close to the average for similar schools. Pupils achieved higher grades in single award science than they did in most of their other subjects.

123. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well below average and match the test and examination results, both at the age of 14 and at the age of 16. Some pupils reach standards that are at least average and above, but these are a small minority. By the age of 14 most pupils have learned to plan experiments and attempt to predict the results. Higher-attaining pupils speculate about the outcome of their investigations and, with some prompting, they use knowledge about one experiment to predict the outcome of another. For example, they remembered how some metals react with water, and successfully worked out what would happen when zinc is added to copper sulphate solution. Lower-attaining pupils know that matter is made up of particles, and can identify drawings of the arrangement of particles in solids, liquids and gases, but have difficulty relating this to phenomena such as conduction and convection.

124. By the age of 16, the small proportion of higher-attaining pupils have a good grasp of the science needed for the higher level GCSE examination. They understand and describe accurately the function and action of organs such as the heart, use complex theory to calculate the proportions of constituents in a chemical compound and understand the similarities and differences between the ways heat can be transferred. Pupils in lower sets follow ideas such as the conversion of energy from one form into another, although some have difficulty describing the process in their own words. Investigation work generally lacks detail. Some pupils analyse their results and explain what they have done to improve their investigations, but others write very brief conclusions and find evaluation difficult. In all years there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

125. Pupils' coursework is hampered by their poor writing skills. Lower-attaining pupils do not express themselves clearly and spelling and syntax are often inaccurate. This is partly because they do not get enough practice in lessons to write in their own words. Teachers are rightly concerned to make sure pupils have accurate notes and so they frequently provide these as sentences with missing words for pupils to complete. While this is better than

copied notes and makes pupils think about what they are learning, it does not help them acquire the necessary skills for writing longer reports. Pupils' numeracy skills do not hold them back unduly. They know how to draw line graphs and comment on what they show. The department cannot meet the statutory requirement to use ICT in science, because there are hardly any suitable computers. While this will be put right when the school moves to its new site, there is an urgent need to provide pupils who are in the school now with opportunities to use computers in the laboratories.

126. Achievement, although satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils' frequent absences have an adverse effect on the way they build up their knowledge of scientific facts and ideas. For this reason, although they usually learn effectively in lessons, they often miss the reinforcement in the next lesson. Alternatively they miss the start of a topic and are unable to catch up. Teachers try hard to help pupils cover the gaps but this means repeating work and those who have not been absent get bored. Underachievement is most evident in Years 7 to 9. However, well motivated pupils in higher groups in Year 9 make good progress in lessons and their achievement is at least satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, poor attendance continues to have a significant effect on progress, but analysis of results suggests that in general achievement is satisfactory between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Pupils in the higher groups work hard to overcome the weaknesses from earlier years and their achievement is good. These pupils are keen to do well and attend the revision sessions which teachers run outside lesson times. Some pupils have high aspirations and are looking forward to studying advanced level sciences at college.

127. Teachers know pupils well and make good provision for those with special needs of all kinds. Pupils with the most pressing special educational needs are supported well in class. This enables them to make progress at the same rate as others. Pupils whose home language is not English are not disadvantaged in any way and pupils from ethnic minority groups and Traveller families make satisfactory progress in most lessons.

128. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in spite of the department being under pressure through the long-term absence of a teacher. Half the teaching seen was satisfactory and almost a third was good. One in seven lessons was very good. The only unsatisfactory lesson was with a teacher who was new to a class which had been taught by a succession of temporary teachers and the class was not ready to settle to work. After this difficult start the teacher developed a good relationship with the class. Teachers, on the whole, manage pupils' behaviour effectively and consequently in most lessons pupils settle down to learning.

129. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are usually positive but in a fifth of lessons seen, mainly in Years 7 to 9, pupils' did not have the self-discipline to behave well. It is a tribute to teachers' skill and energy that learning is effective even when pupils attempt to talk among themselves or make irrelevant comments. In a well planned Year 9 lesson on solids, liquids and gases with a lower-attaining group, the teacher broke the lesson into a series of small steps. Discussion and a demonstration were separated by short spells of writing that effectively calmed the pupils, who had difficulty not calling out when the teacher talked to the whole class. In this way the teacher ensured pupils answered demanding questions about the change from ice to water and made sure that they all completed brief but useful notes. Behaviour overall is unsatisfactory. However, the behaviour of older pupils is better. In Years 10 and 11 it is satisfactory in most lessons and good in a quarter of lessons.

130. In the best lessons the teachers enthuse pupils and build up their confidence. In a very good revision lesson for Year 11 the teacher made what could have been a dry lesson going through examination questions interesting, by setting short tasks and circulating to find out what pupils found most difficult. He based his explanations to the whole class on the

difficulties and misconceptions he found when talking to individuals. By the end of the lesson pupils were secure in their understanding of chemical bonds and felt able to tackle the examination with confidence. In some satisfactory lessons a slow start when the teacher talks for too long means there is not enough time at the end to review and emphasise what the lesson was about.

131. The department has identified pupils who have an aptitude for science as gifted and talented, but has not yet found a way to make the work demanding enough for them. In some practical lessons such pupils can extend their understanding. For example, in a lesson on the properties of different metals the higher-attaining pupils worked faster and made more profound deductions. In most lessons the higher-attaining pupils do the same as others and are not challenged enough.

132. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. All pupils take a single science GCSE examination, and have the option of taking additional modules to make up a double award. In the current Year 11, only about a quarter of the year group take the double award. Pupils taking the single award are disadvantaged because they do not have the benefit of the reinforcement that comes from studying a wide range of inter-related topics.

133. Since the school opened in 1999, improvement in science has been good. The head of department has established an effective team. He manages the complexity of having two sets of laboratories well, and is strongly supported by the second in the department, his other colleagues and an able team of technicians. There is a common sense of purpose and teachers are united in their desire to care for their pupils and raise standards. Teaching is monitored effectively by the head of department and there are opportunities for teachers to share good practice by seeing each other teach. Systems for assessing pupils' work are now well established and reliable. Predictions for GCSE results in 2001 are realistic and indicate a small improvement in results.

ART AND DESIGN

134. At the end of Year 9 standards in art and design are below average. By the end of Year 11 pupils reach average standards. Taking into account the below average starting point of pupils they achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 in response to sound teaching and in Years 10 and 11 their achievement is good in response to good teaching.

135. The 2000 results for GCSE art and design were very close to the national average. A higher proportion of girls attained the A*-C grades than boys and a higher proportion of boys attained A*-C grades compared to the proportion of all boys nationally. Pupils taking GCSE art and design achieve, on average, one grade higher than they do in most of their other subjects.

136. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9, and the standards attained by them, have been greatly affected by a fire at the lower school ten weeks before the inspection. The art building was destroyed with the loss of all the equipment, materials, resources and pupils' work. Although relocated in the main building, two of the new art rooms are shared with other subjects and this restricts the range of art and design activities for some classes significantly. Pupils work neatly and carefully but the emphasis on worksheets and exercises, caused in part by the shortage of resources and materials, creates uniformity in the work of pupils of all abilities. Higher-attaining pupils in particular are not sufficiently challenged.

137. Pupils' standards in drawing and painting are well below average on entry to the school with weaknesses in their knowledge of basic colour mixing. Over their next three years they make satisfactory progress in acquiring skills in the use of tones, pattern and design and in exploring ways of mark making. By Year 9 most pupils are showing strengths in design while the higher-attaining pupils are developing a freer style of drawing. Work from direct observation is below average.

138. In Years 10 and 11 pupils demonstrate a growing control of their chosen media and a particular strength in graphic design. Higher-attaining pupils work with precision and attention to detail in creating their designs. They demonstrate a good understanding of the materials and techniques that may be used to realise their ideas. Lower-attaining pupils work neatly on less complex designs to achieve satisfactory standards. Standards of drawing and painting from direct observation are below average overall. The majority of pupils show greater confidence with the designs they derive from their observational studies. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well in learning processes that enable them to create interesting art work from simple designs. Pupils are encouraged to extend their designs into three dimensions either as relief work or free-standing sculptures. A series of painted relief panels was very successful in showing influences from H. R. Geiger's work.

139. The quality of teaching and learning seen in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. In one out of four lessons the teaching is good, in two out of four lessons it is satisfactory and one out of four is unsatisfactory. Where teaching was unsatisfactory the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils was allowed to disrupt the lesson. This prevented the lesson from following its planned course and overshadowed the efforts of the rest of the class. Key features of teaching in successful lessons are the good management of pupils, good relationships between teachers and pupils, and a positive, enthusiastic approach that keep all the pupils focused on their work. Pupils are not very clear about how well they are doing and what to do to improve because work is not marked consistently well and little guidance is given to pupils.

140. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 was good overall. In half the lessons teaching is good or better. Teaching was very good in one Year 10 lesson. While there was some ineffective management of a small number of noisy pupils, the majority of lessons at this age feature very good management of pupils and positive teacher-pupil relationships. As a consequence most pupils are well motivated and learn new skills satisfactorily. The quality of individual support given to pupils with special needs is very good. In one instance the teacher showed patience and sensitivity in guiding a boy through a process requiring a variety of numeracy skills to enlarge a picture. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11, working on individual projects, showed sustained concentration and a keen sense of

urgency as a result of the teacher's enthusiastic encouragement.

141. The leadership and management of art and design are satisfactory. The head of art and design has managed the department effectively over a very difficult period. The establishment of a good scheme of work, which is currently under review, and the agreement of broad principles for teaching have enabled the department to make good progress over its first year. The loss of the lower school art building has been a major setback for the department causing considerable disruption to pupils' learning in art and design, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

142. Due to part-time staff working across a split-site school the head of art and design has very few opportunities to effectively co-ordinate the activities of the department or to meet as a team to establish good practice or agreed standards for assessment. The department has no collection of assessed work, for Years 7 to 9, to use as reference for grading and target setting. Assessment procedures and agreed standards are satisfactory for Years 10 and 11. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress and using the information to help to plan work to challenge all pupils is unsatisfactory.

143. Resources in the lower school are understandably very poor following the fire. In the upper school there is a satisfactory range of materials, equipment and reference books. The department has about ten computers to promote the use of ICT in art and design but they are mostly old computers and, at the time of the inspection, they were not operational.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

144. Standards in design and technology at the end of Year 9 are below average. In work seen during the inspection girls perform slightly better than boys and overall standards match the teachers' assessments. By the age of 14, pupils know the safety rules and are used to working with tools and equipment. They understand how designers work and know that good design stems from thorough research, individual effort and creativity. Although pupils have some ideas about what they would like to make, many of them find designing difficult, especially when answering problems, as basic drawing skills are weak. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those who have English as a second language, do not always complete theory work when the vocabulary is too difficult. A few of the higher-attaining pupils use the word processor well and they present design sheets with neat diagrams and clear explanations by hand. Standards in practical work are better than in theory. Pupils in Year 9, for example, are making models of their initials in metalwork, showing competence in filing and using the forge. In textiles, pupils are making cushions with appliqué, showing skill in tie-dyeing and very good control of the sewing machine. In food, pupils know about batch baking and are producing a range of novelty cakes on a cat theme.

145. In Year 11 the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades, A* to C, in GCSE is well below the national average but the proportion gaining an A* to G grade is just below the national average. Pupils do not do as well in design and technology compared to the other subjects they take. The best results are in food technology, followed by textiles and child development and the worst are in resistant materials. Food groups consist of both boys and

girls, but more girls opt for child development and textiles and more boys take resistant materials. Girls continue to perform more highly than boys.

146. The standard of work seen at the end of Year 11 is well below the national average. By the time they are 16, pupils have good practical skills and use tools and equipment safely. They know about, for example, products for people with special diets, foreign food and parent craft. They make textile items for sale in craft shops, know something of industrial processes and about designing artefacts with a combination of materials. The higher-attaining pupils produce enough good quality portfolio work, sometimes showing skills in word processing, use of clip art and drawing graphs, to secure the GCSE grades they deserve. The lower-attaining pupils, many of whom are boys, do not do enough written work in their files or design folders and consequently fail to attain the grades they should.

147. As they enter school at the age of 11, skills in the subject are very limited. Pupils build on their early experiences, learn the vocabulary of the subject and gain skills in using tools and knowledge of materials on short tasks before commencing designing and making for themselves. Pupils use accurate measuring techniques in their designing, planning and making activities. Consequently by the end of Year 9 pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory.

148. In Years 10 and 11 pupils gain confidence and independence by working with a wider range of equipment and they show good attention to cost and measurement on largely self-set projects. Although standards are well below the national average at the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as a second language, make satisfactory progress, especially in practical work. Pupils who are designated as gifted and talented do not make enough progress, as the projects do not sufficiently stretch their thinking, vocabulary, numeracy or practical skills. Only the higher-attaining pupils produce the quality and quantity of homework appropriate for their ages. In general, poor attendance hinders the progress of many pupils.

149. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers know their subjects thoroughly and are good demonstrators which results in pupils gaining knowledge and good craft skills. The teaching of textiles is particularly inspiring as teachers' enthusiasm helps to motivate the pupils and good work results from the efficient classroom management. Planning and preparation for lessons are good. Teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient time to do their work and enough materials to use. For example, in food lessons, all ingredients are bought for the pupils so they can be adventurous in their selection of recipes. One-to-one help is strong in the department and is particularly beneficial to pupils who lack confidence and understanding and to those who need more persuasion to work harder. However, the provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those who are gifted and talented is inadequate. Work sheets are often too difficult for the former and insufficiently challenging for the latter. Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because most pupils gain in skills, but many do not work fast enough, so they do less. Learning is good for the pupils in Years 10 and 11, as they understand what they are doing, persevere and usually set themselves plenty of work in lessons.

150. Throughout the school, most pupils have good attitudes to the subject as they like making things, try hard and are proud to show what they can do. As most pupils enjoy design and technology, behaviour is good overall. Teachers keep good order and discipline, but there are a few badly behaved pupils in Years 8 and 9 whose behaviour causes teachers to stop the lessons, so wasting others' time. From teachers' detailed marking of

class and homework, pupils in Years 10 and 11 know how well they are doing and how to attain higher grades.

151. The head of the department is a good leader and management is sound. Since the school opened, the department has made satisfactory progress. It is very difficult for the head of the department to oversee the work of the teachers on a split-site, but staffing is now stable and the team meets regularly to share information. Plans are clearly defined and some have already had a good impact on standards and learning. Modules of work are altered if they have not interested the pupils or if results have been below expectations. Attention to pupils' cultural development is good. Daily plans show attention to literacy and numeracy and intent to use computers whenever possible. However, lack of computers and computer-controlled equipment is affecting presentation of portfolios and the type of work offered to the pupils. For example, there is no computer-control work for the younger pupils or GCSE electronics.

152. The time allocated to the subject is low. Single lessons and the problems of the split-site are having a detrimental effect on standards throughout. Problems of poor attendance, resulting in lack of continuity and boys' low attainment have yet to be resolved.

GEOGRAPHY

153. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. The results of end of Year 9 National Curriculum assessments in 2000 indicate above average standards but, as the school agrees, the assessments were not securely based. The 2000 GCSE results were well below average. Girls attained better grades than boys and the small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds gained better grades than most other pupils. Standards in the work of pupils in the current Year 11 are below average. Whilst below average, the standards reached by pupils at both age 14 and 16 years, represent satisfactory achievement when pupils' previously well below average standards are taken into account.

154. There is no significant difference in the standards reached between boys and girls, but the difference in the standards reached by the higher-attaining pupils and those of low attainment is much greater than is usually the case. For instance, by the age of 14 higher-attaining pupils have gained sound and, in the cases of some, above average levels of knowledge and understanding. This was shown, for instance, in a Year 9 lesson where pupils' good knowledge about changes in industry and tourism in Japan was used very well in exploring issues and in asking perceptive questions. The work of average and lower-attaining pupils, on the other hand while mostly accurate factually, often reflects very limited understanding. Their answers to questions are brief and not fully developed, and their written work, including homework, is sometimes not finished and poorly presented.

155. There are far fewer pupils studying geography in Years 10 and 11 than is found in most schools but, by the age of 16, many of the higher-attaining pupils have good geographical knowledge. They use this well to provide descriptions and explanations, to analyse data and to carry out investigation. Most pupils produce factually accurate work, and most develop good skills in map work and in producing clear diagrams. The understanding of average and lower-attaining pupils is sometimes limited. Their oral work is much stronger than their written work often reflecting sound knowledge which they find difficult to express in writing. Written answers, even in the case of higher-attaining pupils, are often too brief and insufficiently detailed especially in giving clear explanations. Numeracy skills are used appropriately to analyse and present data by the majority of pupils.

156. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as do those with English as an additional language. Higher-attaining pupils identified as gifted and talented make satisfactory progress. Pupils from Traveller backgrounds achieve well when they are in school but, as is the case with many other pupils, their achievement is often hindered by poor attendance.

157. Pupils' learning is very strongly supported by good teaching. Teaching was at least good in all of the nine lessons seen during the inspection. In one it was very good, and in another it was excellent. Teachers' good knowledge of the subject results in clear explanations and introductions to lessons. Lessons are well planned to sustain pupils' interest and involvement through well timed and paced learning activities, and to facilitate good individual support and guidance. Pupils achieve well because of positive and encouraging feedback which boosts their confidence as learners. Geographical skills are taught well. For example, pupils in a lower Year 8 group were enabled to learn how to recognise different types of occupation through very clear teaching and explanation and well structured tasks. Questioning is used well to recall earlier learning and to develop thinking.

158. In all lessons, learning is strongly supported by good classroom relationships and skilled behaviour management. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards geography in response to the teachers' high expectations to work hard in lessons. Pupils are often keen to contribute and to do well. They often concentrate well and work productively together in pairs and groups. The good classroom relationships and good behaviour create a positive learning atmosphere. Only a minority of pupils, mainly in Years 7 and 8, have a tendency to be disruptive in geography lessons, but soon settle to learning as a result of firm behaviour management.

159. Imaginative teaching strategies such as role play and well planned and organised group work enable pupils to learn and understand complex issues. This was exemplified very well in a Year 8 lesson on the production of chocolate, when pupils became thoroughly engrossed in exploring the processes and economic principles underpinning the industry. Pupils were fully challenged to work intellectually at full stretch in this lesson. In some others however, this is not always the case with insufficient demand being made of higher-attaining pupils especially. Overall, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to learn and become fluent in extending their ideas. Questioning is sometimes insufficiently probing in this respect and there are some missed opportunities for pupils to learn through recalling earlier learning, sharing findings and discussion. Higher-attaining pupils often finish tasks quickly because they find them easy and are rarely provided with extension tasks. Homework is useful in consolidating learning but does not always require pupils to undertake research of their own. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT in their work, but it is not well used as an integral part of learning especially in the development of geographical skills.

160. Pupils' progress is monitored through the regular marking of their work. However, marking is not detailed enough in providing constructive guidance to help pupils to improve. Furthermore, in attempting to encourage pupils, teachers often accept and praise standards which are too low. Marks are recorded, but systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress are undeveloped as are target setting for improvement, and the measurement of value added. The targets set for GCSE are modest and do not take sufficient account of any value added to pupils' learning by the good teaching.

161. The department is well led and managed. The clear direction provided for the work in geography promotes effective teaching and learning. The work of teachers is well supported and developmental planning is clearly focused on raising standards. The department has made good progress since the new school opened in September 1999. There are clear signs of improving standards.

HISTORY

162. Results in the 2000 GCSE examination were well below the national average. Teachers' assessments of National Curriculum standards at the age of 14 in 2000 were below average. There is evidence that standards are improving and there is promise of further improvement in the future. Standards of work seen during the inspection at the age of 14 and the age of 16 are below average. Nevertheless these results and standards represent a satisfactory level of achievement for these pupils when considered in the light of pupils' standards on entry to the school and the difficulties faced by staff and pupils after the establishment of a new school on split-sites. Boys and girls reach similar standards. Pupils with special educational needs, pupils with English as an additional language and those identified as gifted and talented reach appropriate standards.

163. By the age of 14, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of people, places events and significant historical changes that have taken place from Roman times. They understand concepts such as Treason or Feudalism and this is partly due to a focus on raising the standard of literacy and the frequent use of technical terms. Pupils explain historical events and start to use their own judgement and their imaginations, for example in explaining the violent reactions against machines or saying what they would have done if they were William the Conqueror. Year 8 pupils get the opportunity to make judgements on such things as whether King Charles the First deserved to be executed and they know the importance of using good reliable sources on which to base judgements. Although pupils analyse different interpretations of events this is not done in great depth.

164. By the age of 16, many pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of a range of conflicts in the modern world, for example, Germany 1918-39, Vietnam post 1939, the United States of America 1919-39. Pupils have a sound understanding of chronology and understand the need to use a range of sources. Pupils' ability to interpret historical facts and evidence is weaker. They do not often put forward their own arguments or refute a point of view.

165. The quality of the teaching and the learning is good. All the teaching is good and in ten per cent of lessons it is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning because of good relationships and good control. Consequently pupils are respectful, co-operative and well motivated. Pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding of people, places and events in response to clear explanations and teachers' secure understanding of the subject. Where a topic is taught by two teachers, or where a topic is taught by the same teacher more than once, there is consistency of approach so that pupils in different classes receive similar tuition. The range of approaches teachers use gives pupils the opportunity to make judgements on historical evidence. Pupils are introduced to the importance of using reliable sources. Pupils know how well they are doing and what to do to improve because teachers mark the work thoroughly and give helpful and encouraging comments. Teachers have a clear focus on raising the standard of literacy and this helps pupils to learn and understand technical terms. Pupils with special educational and other needs are catered for in a sensitive unobtrusive way which meets their needs and results in their making progress in lessons. In some classes there is a high level of absence which affects the achievement of those pupils.

166. The best learning was observed in Year 11 where pupils worked in groups to prioritise and link concepts relating to the Cold War between Russia and the USA, and also in Year 8 where groups of pupils took on the roles of people in the 17th century and discussed their lifestyles. Apart from those examples not much group work was seen during inspection week. The relatively short time allocation in Years 8 and 9, the split-site and the underdeveloped use of ICT are all factors holding back pupils' achievement in history.

167. Good leadership and management underpin the satisfactory achievement of pupils and the good teaching and learning. This can be seen in the good documentation, planning, relationships and shared responsibility. The department clearly tries to adhere to the school's mission statement and makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The action plans for the department are clear, sensible and achievable. They help to explain the improvements that have taken place since September 1999 and they hold promise for further improvement in the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

168. Results in examinations taken in 2000 by a small number of pupils at age 16 are above average. In spring 2001, a far greater number of Year 10 pupils entered the GNVQ intermediate examination of the newly introduced "on-line" course derived from Thomas Telford School for the first time and they achieved impressive results. All pupils achieved a pass grade or better, over 80 per cent gained a merit grade or better and over 10 per cent gained a distinction. Aided by very good resources in the ICT suites and consistently good teaching, standards are improving within the subject.

169. From a well below average starting point when they enter the school, pupils attain below average standards by age 14 and age 16. The one third of pupils following accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 reach above average standards by age 16. This represents satisfactory achievement overall and good achievement for those pupils following accredited courses. This reflects good teaching from a committed team as well as sound planning both of the long-term programme and of the content of individual lessons.

170. By the age of 14, pupils cover a range of skills and use a variety of software packages in their lessons. However, some pupils are still unfamiliar with the basic tools and functions of spreadsheets and many show signs of a lack of familiarity with computers for extended work, for example, as they hunt for keys on the keyboard. Year 9 pupils are taught ICT for part of each year whereas in Year 7 and 8 pupils have ICT lessons throughout the year and this has a positive effect on the standards they reach.

171. By age of 16, pupils following accredited courses are able to use desktop publishing software, spreadsheets, databases and cover some aspects of control technology. They search for information using CD-ROM as well as the Internet. Year 11 pupils preparing GCSE coursework make use of images generated and manipulated through the match of appropriate software to the use of scanners and digital cameras. Pupils set up a spreadsheet, enter data and use formulae to calculate results. Higher-attaining pupils explore the results of their calculations further by varying the data they are using. Pupils are generally familiar and comfortable in their use of the technology. However, pupils' keyboard skills are a weakness throughout the age ranges, presenting a barrier to the most speedy use of the technology.

172. Teaching is good overall. Around seventy per cent of lessons are good or better and just over thirty per cent are very good. The quality of teaching has a positive effect on pupils' secure learning. Teachers frequently cross-check for understanding, for example during the introduction to lessons. They devote close attention to pupils as they undertake individual

tasks. They use a good system of tracking pupils' progress to guide their teaching. Teachers' planning is very good in that there is a good match of each task to pupils' different learning needs. Planning defines baseline targets for all pupils and provides extension tasks for the faster or higher-attaining pupils. Teachers explain the technical language of the subject well and encourage pupils to use it correctly. This is particularly important where pupils with lower than average reading skills benefit from this opportunity to extend their vocabulary in the subject. Excellent wall displays contribute to the learning of specialist vocabulary.

173. In some lessons the behaviour of a few pupils slowed down learning of the whole class despite close supervision. The low attendance also subverts the good work of teachers and goes some way to explain the mismatch between good teaching and satisfactory learning. Some unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in a Year 8 lesson, although it was managed skilfully by the staff. Pupils generally take good care of the equipment and treat the resources with appropriate respect.

174. Access to computers at lunchtimes and after school for pupils is good, as is the supervision and support in their use. The contribution of the ICT technician to maintaining the operation of the networks is especially useful. The department also benefits from the service of a core skills development assistant funded by the Education Action Zone. Her high level ICT and personal skills are a valuable resource in assisting individual pupils with a wide range of special needs.

175. The department is well led and managed. There is a clear sense of direction from the head of department about the action to be taken to improve standards. Initial computer training has been provided for teachers in other subjects, and a more comprehensive programme is planned to start during this academic year. Since opening, the school has invested well in ICT resources. There are excellent suites of ICT rooms on both sites and a set of 30 laptop computers have just been purchased by the Education Action Zone for school staff. Ongoing investment in staff training and development contribute to a trend that is strongly positive and upwards. The quality of ICT teaching and improved time allocations in Years 7 to 9 are contributing to an improved skills base among pupils which will be a long-term investment for their success.

176. Those pupils in Years 10 and 11 not taking an examination course in ICT are taught ICT for a series of lessons each year but this, together with insufficient use of computers across subjects, does not give enough opportunity for pupils to reach expected standards. Consequently the standards achieved by these pupils are below average and not as high as those achieved by the pupils who follow an accredited ICT course. Pupils use ICT to present coursework in English and there are some examples of pupils using ICT skills in their work across other subjects. However, most subjects do not have enough computers in their own teaching areas and access to the suites is limited. Furthermore teachers' skills in ICT across the departments is variable and is rightly a priority in staff development plans. As a result the statutory requirement to use ICT in subjects of the National Curriculum is not fulfilled and this affects the standards pupils' achieve.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

177. In 2000 the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 and the percentage of candidates gaining A*-C grades in GCSE at the end of Year 11 were well below national averages. The percentage of candidates achieving A*-G grades was broadly in line with the national average. Girls did better than boys, including those from ethnic minority groups, but all pupils reached higher standards in their other subjects than they did in modern languages.

178. Standards of work seen in French, German, Italian and Spanish are well below average. In Years 7 to 9 the majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, in Years 10 and 11 a significant number of pupils fail to achieve their potential because they are not given enough opportunity to use the languages for themselves and develop skills to the full. Consequently their achievement overall is unsatisfactory. At all stages of learning there is inadequate support for pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils and higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

179. By the end of Year 9 the majority of pupils take part in simple dialogues, respond appropriately to instructions and questions and identify the main points and specific detail from short texts and extracts of speech. Higher-attaining pupils begin to identify and apply patterns in the language and construct sentences to describe events in the past and present, for example, about their leisure activities. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special needs adapt set phrases and, with guidance, identify the main points from short extracts of speech containing familiar language.

180. By the end of Year 11 pupils broaden their range of vocabulary and develop reading and listening skills satisfactorily but the skills of speaking and writing are less secure. Pupils are dependent upon written prompts, notes and prepared models to write accounts or speak at length. They take part in short dialogues exchanging information on a variety of topics. However, this is usually by adapting prepared models and is for rehearsal rather than to give or gather information. Higher-attaining pupils write and memorise oral presentations following models. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs copy and label fairly accurately but have some difficulty understanding the meaning of basic words and phrases. All pupils lack independence in using the languages for themselves because they are given insufficient opportunities to do so in lessons. Their range of vocabulary and structures is limited.

181. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good and in Years 10 and 11 they are satisfactory. In around a quarter of lessons teaching is good or better. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed where pupils made slow progress because expectations were too low and pupils were required to repeat and copy phrases rather than use them in a meaningful way. Listening skills are well developed in all languages because teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach. In most lessons, activities are conducted in the language being learned. The language is usually well matched to pupils' previous experience and capabilities. In the best lessons teachers employ effective checking strategies to make sure all have understood. In lessons in Years 7 to 9 teachers make good use of games and songs to reinforce learning, maintain interest and elicit oral responses from pupils. Pupils respond positively to this, are well motivated and enjoy these activities. Presentations of new language are clear and teachers make good use of the overhead projector and flashcards. This enables pupils to contribute successfully to oral work and identify patterns in the language.

182. In the most effective lessons pupils are given the opportunity to practise informally in pairs and to use the language to gather and give information. For example, in Italian pupils took part in a role play to buy postcards and stamps and ask the cost of their purchases. Effective question and answer technique in a Year 7 French lesson enabled pupils to use the language to describe how they get to school. In a Year 8 French lesson lower-attaining pupils were given effective support to enable them to label places in a town but in many lessons written resources are too difficult for these pupils and their progress is slowed as a result. In Years 10 and 11 activities are often led by the teacher. This lessens pupils' opportunities to use the language for themselves and the emphasis is too often upon reading and writing to the detriment of speaking and listening. Consequently pupils fail to gain confidence in manipulating the language for themselves in realistic situations.

183. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are positive. They are well behaved in lessons, listen attentively and when asked to work in pairs they work sensibly and concentrate on tasks set. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers and want to do well.

184. Since the school opened in 1999 improvement has been satisfactory. Staffing has improved significantly, curricular provision is good; pupils are given the opportunity to study two languages and arrangements have been made for pupils in Year 11 to continue their study of Spanish to GCSE. Additional classes run by teachers in the holidays and after school help with examination preparation. Opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support and extend their learning are inadequate.

185. Teachers track pupils' progress well but assessment information is not used effectively to plan for the progress of groups of differing ability within lessons. Some classes are taught away from specialist areas, for example in science laboratories where acoustics are poor and this adversely affects the quality of speaking and listening activities. Timetable arrangements lead to teachers having too little time to set up activities because of travel between the two sites and this restricts the range and variety of activities provided, particularly for dual linguists in Years 8 and 9. There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the department and there is a need for the department to monitor this more closely, share ideas and spread good practice. The department is beginning to work well as a team and has a good capacity to improve further.

MUSIC

186. Music is taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 and 8 and in Year 9 as part of a performing arts course. This reduces by half the time in which to teach music and consequently the requirements of the National Curriculum are not covered. The effect is to lower the standards that pupils achieve in music. Consequently the standards reached by pupils aged 14 are below average whereas in Year 7 most pupils reach the standards expected for their age. Given pupils' well below average starting point this represents satisfactory achievement over three years and good achievement in Year 7. Owing to staff illness, it was not possible to inspect the work of Year 8 pupils. Music is not taught as a separate subject in Years 10 and 11.

187. Year 7 pupils have a good knowledge of rhythmic notation. They define individual note values, make up four-bar rhythms accurately and clap them confidently. They revise and use the knowledge they acquire by working on keyboard sheets of increasing difficulty. They sing confidently, complete short melodies and listen to short musical extracts with a view to recognising the instruments involved.

188. Pupils in Year 9 have a satisfactory knowledge of popular music in the 1950's demonstrated in projects which they present to each other. In their evaluations of each other's work they show an understanding of the requirements of the project and the criteria for good presentation. There is little evidence of the reinforcement or development of musical skills learnt in the previous two years. The majority of the projects were satisfactorily completed, but there was little original work.

189. Music is taught in mixed-ability classes and every attempt is made to ensure that tasks are suitable for all pupils. This is achieved by the progressive nature of the work sheets. Higher-attaining pupils make progress through their own industry and willingness to work. Opportunities are missed for teachers to set specific targets to challenge pupils further. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The teacher knows the pupils well and encourages their interests. One Year 7 pupil with special needs has composed and cut his own compact disc.

190. Pupils' response in Years 7 and 9 is good. Pupils are eager to answer questions. They have a good relationship with the teacher, which influences their attitude to the subject. Pupils enjoy their lessons, particularly the practical work. In one class, behaviour improved noticeably once the practical work started. Pupils in Year 9 assess each other's work in a sensitive manner and award their grades according to quality of the work. Not all pupils have a positive attitude towards homework and some are reluctant to complete it and hand it in.

191. Teaching and learning in Years 7 and 9 are good. One lesson in Year 7 was excellent. The teacher enables pupils to recall previous lessons and develop understanding by good use of questioning. Effective use of time goals encourages pupils to complete tasks quickly and accurately. A brisk pace to lessons ensures that pupils are fully engaged throughout. This leads to good behaviour and good learning. The teacher has high expectations, and circulates during instrumental work evaluating, offering advice and giving encouragement. Pupils leave lessons with a sense of achievement knowing how they have made progress. Homework develops the learning covered in class and is set regularly. There are missed opportunities to involve pupils in evaluation of class performances and consequently to develop their literacy skills. Singing as a means of completing their melodies is not used as often as it could be.

192. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. There is a shortage of teaching time in Year 9; it does not incorporate the requirements of Curriculum 2000; it does not meet the statutory requirement to use ICT; and there is not enough access to music from different cultures. These limitations in the curriculum limit the opportunities for pupils to experience worthwhile music making. There is no music offered at GCSE. Assessment procedures do not make use of National Curriculum criteria, and the outcomes of assessment are not used either to monitor pupils' progress or to influence curriculum planning. The required teacher assessments are not carried out in Year 9.

193. Six teachers from Manchester Music Service provide instrumental lessons to sixty pupils, mostly in Year 7. The teaching in these lessons is good and all pupils make progress. Extra-curricular activities are otherwise limited in scope, partly due to the school being split between two sites, and partly due to the fact that the three after-school rehearsals revolve around one group of instrumentalists. Two sets of steel pans are unused, except for instrumental lessons, and more opportunities for music making are required to cater for the rich diversity of the school population.

194. Management of the music department is under the direction of the head of performing arts. The bonding of philosophies with the other music staff urgently requires strengthening in order to achieve more cohesion within the music education of pupils in Years 7 to 9.

195. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. There is a shortage of appropriate space with no areas for group practice during lesson time and no secure area where computers can be set up. The overall appearance is shabby, despite attempts within the teaching rooms to improve the décor with displays. Resources are unsatisfactory. The majority of the existing percussion instruments are in need of replacement and none of the keyboards have editing facilities. There are no musically dedicated computers and there is a shortage of instruments from different cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

196. Standards in physical education are above average overall but the GCSE results in 2000, taken by a small number of pupils, were well below average. Nevertheless physical education at St. Peter's school is a successful subject. Pupils are encouraged through good teaching to develop their skills to a high level, and many pupils and teams compete successfully at district, regional and national level. Standards overall are improving. This is demonstrated in the comprehensive records of teachers' assessments, the rising numbers taking the GCSE examination in physical education, and the significant improvement in the grades pupils are on course to achieve in the 2001 GCSE examination. There is strong evidence to suggest that this trend will continue.

197. By the age of 14, pupils reach above average standards with many boys reaching well above average standards. Pupils perform skilfully in a range of games, and show good understanding of the principles of play and tactics. Particularly good standards are achieved in basketball where pupils demonstrate ball handling skills of a high order and have good levels of tactical acumen. Pupils demonstrate good levels of performance in all lessons. However, pupils' ability to evaluate and improve performance by observing, analysing and commenting on their own and others' performance is weaker because pupils have less opportunity to do so. Pupils have a good understanding of health-related fitness and the effects of exercise on the body. They warm up before strenuous activity and name the muscle groups they are stretching. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner and make good progress. There are no observable differences in standards achieved in terms of ethnicity. Taking into account the well below average starting point of pupils their achievement over Years 7 to 9 is very good.

198. By the end of Year 11 standards are average overall. Many pupils perform at above average levels, but overall poor attendance in some lessons influences the overall achievement of pupils. Pupils build on the strong foundations laid in lower school, and progress and learning in lessons are always at least good, because most pupils work hard to improve individual and team standards. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, apply their specific knowledge, performance skills and understanding of rules and tactics, in full games. As tactical awareness develops alongside technical skills, pupils make effective decisions in offensive and defensive situations.

199. The wide range of pupils who attend extra-curricular clubs and groups make very good progress in their chosen activity, reflected in both the success of representative teams, and the general standards seen in lessons. Due to the amalgamation, not all pupils in Year 10 and 11 have benefited from the influence of the present strengths of the department. Consequently standards overall are not as high as they are in Years 7 to 9. However, pupils continue to make significant gains in their performance, knowledge and understanding and consequently their achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good.

200. Teaching and learning are good overall and are very good in Years 7 to 9. Teachers know their pupils well, and this enables effective class management and organisation. All

teachers have a secure knowledge of the activities they teach and are enthusiastic. They have high expectations of pupils and maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons. Targets for lessons are clear and explicit, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Lessons are planned effectively. Well selected tasks build on pupils' prior experience, enabling them to consolidate their existing knowledge and skills through practice, learn new skills, and develop a deeper understanding of strategic play in games. This gives structure in lessons and helps progress for all pupils. The high quality of teachers' observations, ongoing assessments and immediate feedback to pupils is a strength, and is particularly effective where there is a specific target to be achieved. Teachers give specific coaching to enable individuals or groups of pupils to work at their own pace. There are missed opportunities to involve pupils more actively in the evaluation of their own work and in assessment. Teachers have successfully generated within the department a tangible ethos of success based on challenge, support, and trust.

201. Pupils respond well to the stimulating and enjoyable environment created by the purposeful yet sympathetic approach of teachers. Pupils are well turned out, are positive about the subject, pay close attention to teachers' guidance, and work with energy and enthusiasm in lessons. Interpersonal relationships between pupils themselves and between pupils and staff are good, as are pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. These factors clearly contribute to pupils' overall good progress, and to their personal and social development.

202. Staff are committed to raising levels of pupils' self-confidence, and their success is demonstrated by high rates of involvement and good attitudes to work of pupils in lessons. The work of the staff and the achievement of the pupils has been recognised by Sport England who have granted the school the Sportsmark Award, by the Football Association who have awarded the Charter Standard to the school, and by the Manchester Giants Basketball Club who recognise the standard of basketball in the school through their School of Excellence Award.

203. Strong leadership by the head of department is at the heart of this effective and highly committed team, who work well together with a shared sense of purpose. The extensive extra-curricular provision is a particular strength, not only in raising levels of involvement in sporting activity, but also in the context of wider community links. The department has worked hard to create a shared set of values following the amalgamation, only 18 months ago, of three schools. This contributes significantly to the rapidly developing ethos of the school. The assessment arrangements provide accurate information to pupils about their performance. The link between assessment and the programme of monitoring teaching is helping to secure improving standards. There are extensive and well maintained facilities; the department is well equipped and there is a clear imperative to improve on previous best in all respects.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

204. There has been a decisive approach to the development of the GNVQ ICT programme reflected in the commitment of both funds and senior management time to the project. The school has set itself realistic targets of doubling the uptake of the GNVQ ICT course and of increasing the pass rate for Leisure and Tourism in Year 11.

205. The GNVQ course in ICT, which makes use of “on-line” material available from the Thomas Telford School, presents a model of what can be achieved with a well developed vocational education course. Some units of GNVQ Leisure and Tourism are also available in the Year 10 option pattern, assessed either at foundation or intermediate level depending on the needs of individual students.

206. Results in the first examined part of the ICT course are impressive. All pupils entered achieved a pass grade or better. In one group of 34 pupils, only three achieved simply a pass grade. Twenty eight pupils gained a merit and three gained a distinction.

207. Students report high levels of satisfaction with the programme and in the classes observed the motivating effect both of the methodology and of their success was clearly evident. In order to follow this course pupils have been disapplied from design and technology. The school is rightly pleased that difficult decisions on disapplication have had such a successful outcome.

208. Over 20 pupils from Years 10 and 11 follow NVQ courses in partnership with local training providers. Difficulties associated with timetabling a full day out of school, complexities of administration and liaison, loss of input to other subjects and perceived pressure on the pupils as a result mean that there is less gain from this programme than the school would ideally like.

209. There has been an admirable start to vocational provision but the school does not yet provide the range of non-GCSE courses nor the breadth of vocational choice which could contribute to the needs of this group as part of the school’s strategy in addressing issues of attendance and under achievement. Setting the nature of the cohort and the demotivation signalled by the poor attendance rate against the standards already achieved, there are obvious gains which the school has yet to achieve from exploring the potential of disapplication and the fuller development of a vocational education programme.

PERFORMING ARTS

210. The GCSE results for 2000 were just below the national average and pupils generally achieved better grades in performing arts than they did in most of their other subjects. Standards in lessons are above average and GCSE results for 2001 are on course to improve. Taking into account the prior attainment of these pupils their achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good.

211. Pupils in Year 10 use a good range of theatrical skills to portray their understanding of the poem “The Naming of Cats” by T.S. Eliot. Having watched and analysed a professional video of the musical production “Cats”, pupils produced imaginative facial designs, improved their pronunciation and started to add relevant movement as they recited the poems.

212. Year 11 pupils developed and took on a range of parts and roles in a drama produced and performed as part of the Manchester Arts Festival. The drama was based on the story of "Caliban" and it involved all the Year 11 pupils following the course. The two lead parts were outstanding. They were able to convey successfully not only a complex story but also the underlying moral and social messages of the piece. The very high quality of the final production not only reflects the breadth and level of theatrical skills of all those pupils involved but also their commitment to rehearsal and preparation over a period of time. In lessons Year 11 pupils reveal a good understanding of the requirements of the "controlled test" section of the examination. They use their knowledge and experience of theatre skills to plan a production. They discuss rehearsals, props and costumes.

213. The attitude and behaviour of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Pupils' response in Year 10 lessons is excellent. The relationship between pupils and teacher develops to well beyond the levels observed in Years 7 to 9, and an environment exists which benefits learning and progress.

214. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. The teaching in Year 10 was excellent. Teaching captures pupils' attention at the beginning of lessons and sustains this until the very end. The relationship built up encourages the pupils to want to succeed. Lessons are fun and the teacher provides an excellent role model which the pupils consciously or sub-consciously copy. Planning is meticulous and the pace is sustained throughout the lesson. Homework is set regularly and required to be handed in on time. Pupils are aware of their progress and what they have to do to achieve a better grade.

215. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is well planned and invigorating. It not only gives the pupils a good grounding in theatrical preparation and presentation, but also boosts pupils' confidence. There are regular presentations which begin as part of the course, and extend into after school activities as the production approaches. Every November an international evening is presented which incorporates a wide range of multi-cultural items. These evenings are well attended by parents who offer further support by contributing to front of house activities and arranging transport for after school rehearsals. Accommodation in the upper school is good with plenty of space and practical working areas.