

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST WILFRID'S RC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

South Shields

LEA area: South Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108736

Headteacher: Mr M Wiblin

Reporting inspector: Mrs C Gillies  
20597

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2002

Inspection number: 232444

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Harton Lane  
South Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
Postcode: NE34 0PH

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Arthurs

Date of previous inspection: April 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20597	Mrs C Gillies	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9039	Mr B Eyre	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?
23393	Mr B Dower	Team inspector	English	
27416	Mr T Howard	Team inspector	Mathematics	
5241	Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Science English as an additional language Equal opportunities	
12331	Ms V Grigg	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs	
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
3827	Mr J Knight	Team inspector	Geography	
8672	Mr M Roberts	Team inspector	History	
18032	Ms I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4373	Mr P McKenzie	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
19532	Ms E Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4647	Ms J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Wilfrid's is an average sized, mixed, Roman Catholic, voluntary aided, comprehensive school with just over 900 pupils. There are more boys than girls, particularly in Years 7 and 10. Just over 15 per cent of pupils take free school meals – about average. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs (14 per cent) and pupils with statements of special educational need (1.7 per cent) are both average. Pupils come from six main local Roman Catholic primary schools and homes with an average socio-economic level. Year 7 pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average but it has been lower in recent years. With very few from minority ethnic backgrounds, 97 per cent of pupils are white. Practically all of the few pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently. In addition to Investor in People status since June 1998, the school received a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) achievement award in February 2001 and Beacon status in September 2001. The school is involved with numerous national and local initiatives including Neighbourhood Renewal and Excellence in Cities (EiC). The latter funds the new learning support unit – the ARC centre (Attainment, Reintegration and Challenge), two learning support mentors and the development of programmes for gifted and talented pupils. It has also contributed towards the City Learning Centre, due to open in September 2002.

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

St Wilfrid's is a successful school which continues to improve. Standards have gone up since the last inspection; they are particularly good in English. Teaching and learning have also improved – they are now good and very good in several subjects. Pupils receive excellent pastoral support and care. Leadership and management are very good. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Standards have gone up since the last inspection; they are particularly good (well above average) in English.
- Teaching and learning are good. During the inspection teaching was at least good in almost 80 per cent of lessons including over 40 per cent when it was very good. It has improved since the last inspection.
- Leadership and management are very good overall.
- The pastoral support and care provided for pupils are excellent, as are the systems which encourage their good behaviour. These are complemented by the excellent provision for pupils' moral development.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good. The great majority concentrates hard in lessons and has excellent relationships with teachers and other pupils.
- Funds for initiatives, particularly for provision for gifted and talented pupils and Beacon status, are used extremely well and successfully.
- Teachers and other staff new to the school and the profession receive excellent support. Their professional development is valued and this contributes to improved teaching and learning.
- The school's excellent links with the community benefit pupils' learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- Below average standards in French. The long-term absence of the head of department and lack of leadership contribute to the poor performance. Teaching is only just satisfactory overall.
- Below average GCSE science results. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not make enough progress.
- Aspects of the curriculum in science, German, design and technology and art.
- The library is very poor in every respect.
- The review and regularity of risk assessments, particularly in physical education, design and technology and science. Minor health and safety issues were raised with the school during the inspection.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION (April 1996)

Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good and the school is in a strong position to carry on developing well. Of the nine issues raised in the last report six have been dealt with fully. The school has maintained its commendable features, the special educational needs policy is in line with statutory requirements, history results have improved, the areas of weak teaching have been eradicated, planning is realistic and well linked to financial considerations, and the senior management team is now most effective and monitoring the school well. The issue about the poor quality of the library will undoubtedly be tackled when the new City Learning Centre is complete. The remaining issues, about resources and the deployment of teaching staff, continue to be areas of development although for different reasons now. Most departments have made at least as much progress as might be expected in six years, or have caught up since September 2001. In the last three years the modern foreign languages department has stagnated and art has not really evolved enough.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16-year-olds (Year 11) based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

**Years 7 to 9:** Average standards in 2001 national tests overall but above average in English. Girls do better than boys in English and boys better than girls in science. The trend in test results is below that seen nationally. Present standards of work are above average in English, mathematics, science, geography and history, below average in French and average in all other subjects. Pupils' progress and achievement are very good in mathematics, good in English, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education, unsatisfactory in French and satisfactory in all other subjects. Pupils start German in Year 9 and make very good progress.

**Years 10 and 11:** An average percentage of pupils attained five GCSE grades A\*-C in 2001. The percentage of pupils attaining five grades A\*-G continued to be well above average. The trend in the school's results over the last five years has been above that seen nationally. Significantly, the percentage of pupils who attained A\*-C grades in all three core subjects (English mathematics and science) went up in 2001. Standards of work seen closely matched the 2001 GCSE results: well above average in English and drama, above average in geography, history, ICT and music, below average in art and French and average in all other subjects. Progress and achievement are very good in English, good in art, history, ICT, mathematics and physical education, unsatisfactory in science, French and German and satisfactory in all other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress in all years. The school's 2002 targets are realistically challenging.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in the majority of lessons. They work hard and are keen to improve their results. Older pupils are confident about their education plans and what they hope to study.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour was at least good in 90 per cent of lessons seen and very good in half. Moving around the school and at break-times

	pupils behave sensibly and they are considerate and polite. The number of exclusions is low and continues to fall.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Parents rightly observe that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Pupils appreciate how everything they do has an effect on others and they respect each other's feelings and beliefs. Prefects perform their duties thoughtfully. Pupils who attend the ARC centre appreciate the help they receive.
Attendance	Above average and better than last academic year. Unauthorised absence is mostly explained by the few pupils who have very poor attendance and those who take holidays during term-time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
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 has improved since the last inspection. During the inspection it was at least good in almost four out of five lessons and very good in over two out of five. It was excellent in eight lessons, spread between five subjects. The quality of teaching was almost the same in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, but particularly effective in Year 7. Pupils' learning closely matched the quality of teaching. About two-thirds of teaching was very good in English and drama, art, ICT, history, and mathematics. All teaching was at least good in geography, music and physical education. It is striking how well teachers get on with pupils. The encouraging and constructive relationships teachers generate are a vital element of the many successful lessons. They significantly contribute to pupils' interest, enthusiasm and hence, good learning. Pupils behaved very well and worked hard in over 90 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well. Teachers are attentive to the particular needs of gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound overall but with aspects that are not: very few pupils taking dual award science; the late introduction of a second language (German); the balance of different areas in design and technology; the missing statutory elements of art in Years 7 to 9. The range of extra-curricular activities is good overall, very good in music and physical education and excellent in drama.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. With a generous teacher/pupil ratio those with particular needs receive individual attention which improves their behaviour and/or work. The ARC centre and special educational needs provision are closely linked to provide the best arrangements for all pupils. Although there are only a few learning support assistants, they contribute very well to pupils' good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The very few pupils who do not speak English as their first language receive the right level of support and make good progress. All are fully integrated into school life.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, particularly for spiritual and social development, which in turn contribute to the excellent provision for pupils' moral development. Teachers treat pupils most respectfully and the Christian faith underpins and strengthens many aspects of school life.
How well the school cares	Excellent. The school could hardly do more to provide pastoral support,



for its pupils	advice and care for all pupils. A range of systems swing into place quickly if pupils have personal or academic problems. The arrangements to encourage good behaviour are excellent.
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Parents are most supportive of the school and are very pleased their children attend it. The school's links with the community are excellent and benefit pupils' learning.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher gives thoughtful and firm leadership based on his strong insight into the school's strengths and areas for development. He is very well supported by the newly structured, and most competent, senior management team and many hardworking middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive and the chair gives up much time to work for the school. They bring a good range of expertise and experience to their work. There is no curriculum committee. The majority of governors probe and evaluate decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Since the last inspection the collection of performance data has improved significantly. Interpretation, distillation and response to this data is improving. The senior management team monitors teaching and learning carefully. Reviews of progress each year are helpful and realistic. Department development plans still do not blend into the whole school development plan well enough.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Capital spending is allocated strictly according to the school's long-term plans and value for money is considered carefully. Funds for initiatives, particularly for provision for gifted and talented pupils and Beacon status, are used extremely well and successfully. The school gives good value for money.

Teachers and other staff new to the school and the profession receive excellent support. Their professional development is valued and this contributes to improved teaching and learning. There are not enough resources overall, for example too few textbooks in several subjects. The library is very poor in every respect.

#### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best and it is helping them to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>Behaviour is good.</li> <li>Children like school and they make good progress.</li> <li>Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems and feel it is well led and managed.</li> <li>Teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<p>A few parents think:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children do not get the right amount of homework and particularly that lower attainers do not have enough.</li> <li>The school does not work closely with them.</li> <li>They find the timing of parents' evenings difficult and do not see enough teachers at them.</li> <li>The school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Two out of five parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and several wrote comments on the back; 24 attended the parents' meeting. The inspection certainly confirmed all their positive views. In general, all pupils do get the right amount of homework but a significant number do not write it down in the diaries or fill gaps by writing down what they have done in class. The school is aware of parents' concerns about parents' evenings and intends to improve them. The range of activities outside lessons is very good in physical education, excellent in drama and good in other subjects, so parents' comments about extra-curricular activities were not supported by inspection findings. In fact it is impressive how many pupils participate in these activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

*Attainment refers to standards compared to national averages. Standards are also compared with results obtained in similar schools, that is those with a similar uptake of free school meals. Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school, or when they started their GCSE courses. Thus good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.*

1. Standards of attainment on entry were significantly higher in 1995 than in 1996. The 1995 year group produced the school's best end of Year 9 national test results in 1998, and two years later its best GCSE results. From its detailed analysis of pupils' attainment on entry and other tests, the school predicted that GCSE results would drop slightly in 2001. Since 1997 standards of attainment on entry have crept up steadily. This is reflected in the standards of work seen in each year group. The present Year 7 pupils entered the school with above average attainment but those in Year 11 entered closer to average. English consistently attains the best Year 9 and GCSE results. The school received a DfES achievement award for its GCSE results in 2000 and was awarded Beacon school status in September 2001.
  - Standards of work seen are above average overall.
  - Pupils achieve well and make good progress overall.

**End of Year 9:** *pupils are expected to reach at least National Curriculum Level 5 in English, mathematics and science national tests taken at the end of Year 9. Level 6 and above are referred to as higher levels. Average point scores are calculated as follows: Level 5 is worth 33 points. A pupil achieving Level 5 in all three subjects would therefore have an overall (average) point score of 33. The national overall point score was 33.5 in 2001.*

2. Results in the end of Year 9 national tests have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 2001 the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The percentage reaching the higher levels, and the average point scores, were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. After the record 34.9 in 1998, the school's overall point score dropped in 1999 and recovered to 34.1 in 2000 and 2001, with an encouraging upward movement in science. As national results improved over this period the 2001 overall point score was only just above average. The trend in the school's results over the last five years has been below that seen nationally.
3. Compared with similar schools, the overall point score in 2001 was average. The English average point score was above average. What is impressive is that the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above, compared to similar schools, was

well above average in English, mathematics and science. These statistics show that achievement has been good for middle and lower attainers over the last few years, but not quite so strong for higher attainers, particularly in mathematics and science.

4. Overall, boys did slightly better than girls in three of the last five years; girls did slightly better than boys in 1998 and 2001. For the first time girls did better than boys in mathematics in 2001, reflecting the national picture. Consistently, girls do better than boys in English and boys better than girls in science. However, relative to results by gender nationally, in some years boys have done better than girls in English. The school is alert to these complex gender differences in performance.
5. Standards of work seen are:
  - Above average in English, mathematics, science, geography and history.
  - Below average in French and low in German (because pupils only start the language in Year 9 and have only one hour's teaching each week).
  - Average in all other subjects.
6. Progress and achievement are:
  - Very good in mathematics and German.
  - Good in English, geography, history, ICT and physical education.
  - Unsatisfactory in French.
  - Satisfactory in all other subjects.

**GCSE results:** *In 2001 nationally, 48 per cent of pupils attained five or more grades A\*-C, 91 per cent attained five or more grades A\*-G and 96 per cent attained one or more grades A\*-G. The average total points score was 39.0 (calculated by 8 points for A\*, 7 for A, etc).*

7. As predicted by the school, the percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A\*-C in 2001 (48 per cent) was not as good as it had been between 1998 and 2000 (the best year) but it still matched the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining five grades A\*-G continued to be well above average. The trend in the school's results over the last five years has been above that seen nationally. The point scores reveal that in 2001 boys did better than ever before, whilst the girls' point score, although still higher than the boys, dropped. The overall point score was above average nationally and well above average compared to similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE grades A\*-C was above that obtained in similar schools and very high in terms of five GCSE grades A\*-G. Significantly, the percentage of pupils who attained A\*-C grades in all three core subjects (English mathematics and science) went up in 2001.
8. In 2001, and for several years before, results were well above average in English and English literature, the latter commendably taken by all pupils. In mathematics they were just below average. For the last time in 2001 a small group of pupils took the three separate sciences and their performance was just below average. In dual award science, taken by the large majority, results were well below average. Considering all the science courses together, results at grades A\*-C were below average. Results were below average in sports studies and business studies but results in these subjects were relatively strong for the pupils who took them.
9. History results were above average in 2001, representing a significant improvement since the last inspection. Only a small number of pupils took art in 2001 and results, as in 2000, were well below average. Within the design and technology subjects only graphics results were close to average in 2001, the rest were below, though they have been better in previous years. The small group of higher attainers who took German attained well above average results. Results have not improved enough since the last

inspection in art, and French results have declined sharply since 1998 when they were average, to well below average. Pupils' spoken French is well below average and much of the writing they do is merely copying. However, they listen and read French reasonably competently. In all other subjects results were close to, or in line with, the average. GCSE French standards are now well below, and in German they are below, pupils' performance in their other subjects.

10. Standards of work seen are:
  - Well above average in English and drama.
  - Above average in geography, history, ICT and music.
  - Below average in art and French.
  - Average in all other subjects.
11. Progress and achievement are:
  - Very good in English.
  - Good in mathematics, art, history, ICT and physical education.
  - Unsatisfactory in science, French and German.
  - Satisfactory in all other subjects.
12. **English/literacy:** Pupils read well and tackle a wide range of increasingly demanding texts as they progress through the school. They read critically and identify and explain the techniques used to convey a meaning or message. Pupils' good reading means they understand the range of texts they meet in all subjects. They speak confidently and articulately and show respect by listening to what others have to say. Listening skills are a strength and contribute significantly to how well pupils achieve. Pupils adapt their speech as a situation demands. Writing is usually well structured and presented with care. Year 9 pupils write fluently at length and adapt their style for different purposes. Top set pupils (higher attainers) use an extensive range of vocabulary and lower set pupils produce particularly good work on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Pupils find it difficult to write direct speech and many do not use a sufficient variety of sentence structures.
13. GCSE pupils write in a range of styles suited to the subjects being studied. They use the correct technical terms in most subjects. Current Year 11 pupils' analytical work in English is particularly strong, especially in their writing on set texts. Pupils express ideas clearly, explain their significance and then exemplify them with textual references. Their planning and drafting skills are well developed and they present their work using ICT confidently and proficiently. Their punctuation and spelling are generally good but a minority does not use grammar correctly.
14. **Mathematics:** Year 7 pupils work out mental arithmetic tasks more rapidly and confidently than many older pupils. Pupils' thinking and problem solving skills have improved this year. Year 7 pupils have very good understanding of number patterns, symmetry and algebraic expressions. Year 8 lower set pupils worked confidently using computers, for example to predict shapes produced by a simple series of instructions. By Year 9, most top set pupils work at high levels successfully. Lower set pupils in Year 9 study work which is challenging, including volumes of prisms, areas of compound shapes and simple equations. Some pupils, however, have difficulty remembering the difference between 'x squared' and '2x'. Years 10 and 11 project work shows pupils' analytical skills develop well. Their coursework reflects their clear understanding and analysis of problems, and they use diagrams, ICT and algebra well to present conclusions. By the end of Year 11, higher attainers calculate standard deviations most competently and lower attainers can find factors of numbers up to 100 accurately.

15. **Numeracy:** in general, pupils' skills are good and good enough to support their learning in all subjects. Years 7 to 9 pupils have better skills than those in Years 10 and 11 due to the positive effects of the National Numeracy Initiative. In their coursework, top set Years 10 and 11 pupils employ sophisticated analysis of data in several subjects. In science, pupils practise calculations, apply formulae and draw graphs accurately. In geography, pupils present data in a variety of forms, such as scatter graphs and pie charts. Pupils develop accurate drawing and measuring skills, such as weighing and calculating proportions, in design and technology. In GCSE ICT lessons, pupils used computer software well to analyse profit and loss accounts.
16. **Science:** Year 7 pupils sharpen up their observation skills using a mix of activities from the Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education project (CASE). In Years 10 and 11 particularly, although pupils learn the fundamentals, for example about chemical structures or genetics, they neither develop nor apply their own ideas often enough. They do not move onto more complex work early enough. Pupils do not draw two-dimensional diagrams accurately. The very highest attainers record investigations very well, with detailed conclusions which describe sophisticated observations. In general though, pupils do not evaluate evidence and experimental procedures, or analyse patterns in results well enough in class experiments. Their written conclusions are too brief.
17. **ICT:** By Year 9 pupils are technically competent using ICT programs, although they do not make their own decisions about when and how to use them enough. They have a strong repertoire – desktop publishing, wordprocessing and multimedia. They model situations using spreadsheets competently, but are too strongly directed by teachers. GCSE pupils produce very high quality coursework, analysing problems to find computer-aided solutions and linking spreadsheets, database and communication software. In almost all subjects pupils use CD-Roms and the Internet extensively for research, but they tend to copy material rather than selecting and adapting it. The relevance and significance of information does not have as high a status as presentation. A fine example of ICT used well is when Year 8 pupils write an introduction to the school to welcome future Year 7 pupils. The design and technology department is increasingly using computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) most effectively.
18. The few pupils with English as an additional language generally make good progress in lessons. In modern foreign languages their progress is particularly good, as they apply their language learning skills to French or German. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. In science lessons, pupils from both these groups occasionally make better progress than others because they receive particularly helpful one-to-one support. Standards of work seen suggest that all Year 11 pupils with special educational needs will gain a GCSE grade in English in 2002. They achieve as well as others in mathematics. Recently one pupil no longer needed to have a statement because his performance had improved so much. Two pupils who transferred from another school after exclusion, now have very good behaviour. The school caters particularly well for gifted and talented pupils. Their good progress is described in paragraphs 48 and 49.

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

- Pupils have very good attitudes to school.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good. The number of exclusions is low.
- Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good.
- Attendance is above average.

19. The inspection confirmed that the school is an orderly community where care, understanding and support are given a high priority. Pupils, and parents too, confirm that they value highly the strong relationships they have with their teachers and other adults. They say that the teachers' respect and consideration encourages them to try hard. Showing a pupil how a portrait could be improved, an art teacher sensitively emphasised the positive aspects before demonstrating how the proportions were incorrect. The pupil learnt more than just how to improve the portrait.
20. In lessons pupils are attentive and work hard. They get on well together when they tackle tasks in groups. In a Year 9 food technology lesson they were given outline suggestions and then left, in groups, to plan and prepare their ingredients. Their discussions included debate about which countries grow spices and scientific language about the irreversible changes that happen in cooking. Very good learning took place. In most lessons boys and girls work equally well but usually, boys, who are in the majority, are more willing to enter into discussion or answer questions.
21. During the inspection many pupils took musical instrument examinations. They used every available minute to rehearse and test each other's aural skills – such is their desire to do well. Pupils are most enthusiastic in mathematics and happily answer questions and explain their reasoning. Although Year 7 pupils were desperate to get a chance to speak in English, those not chosen merely sighed and settled to listen to their more fortunate classmates. This enthusiasm for talking about work was seen throughout the school and contributes significantly to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils participate energetically in extra-curricular and sporting activities. On two mornings a week, long before school starts, girls practise trampolining and many play hockey and rounders at lunchtime.
22. The atmosphere in lessons and around the school is harmonious. Pupils are polite, kind and welcoming. In a mature and sensitive manner, Year 11 prefects help teachers to control movement, particularly in the narrow corridors. The school captains are good role models for younger pupils. Lunchtime is peaceful and the pupils enjoy good relationships with the staff. The unsatisfactory arrangements for pupils' independent study in the library will be sorted when the new City Learning Centre is finished. Pupils who belong to the junior section of the Saint Vincent de Paul group go to the local primary school at lunchtime twice a week. They organise games and play with the infant class. The headteacher there describes them as 'pleasant and helpful – they use their own initiative'.
23. The number of unauthorised absences has dropped since the last inspection, particularly since the start of this school year. The vast majority of pupils arrives punctually and lessons start on time. Most parents support the school and explain reasons for absence, but some families do not collaborate, despite the best efforts of the education welfare officer and senior staff. The school is increasingly concerned about the number of families who take their children on holiday during term-time, particularly when this is at the beginning of the school year. The school plans meticulously to ensure that form groups, teaching bands and sets meet the needs of each individual, so it is frustrating when these take a while to settle down, because of absences. Many tutors use registration periods to engage in friendly dialogue with pupils.
24. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well to the very good support they receive. They attend regularly, and join in all the activities on offer; many enjoy drama and sport. The school makes every effort to boost their self-confidence. In the reading

club, a Year 11 pupil who received support in the past, now hears Year 7 pupils read. The few pupils who spend time in the ARC centre find it helpful and reassuring. A few days of quiet work and reflection on how they could change, possibly their inconsiderate behaviour, works wonders; most return to normal lessons quickly. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported and they are totally integrated into the life of the school.

25. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic homes are totally integrated with others. Pupils certainly understand the principles of tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare and few pupils are excluded. They realise that many English texts and religious education lessons involve moral and social issues relevant to their lives, or that ethical issues in geography are complex and often political. They try hard to empathise with those less fortunate than themselves; not only by raising funds for charity, but also by debating issues, such as forced migration in geography or suffering during the war in history. Higher attaining pupils appreciate the links between historical studies and current events, for example considering how past and present frustrations can lead to acts of violence.

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

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
26. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. During the inspection, it was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. It was good in 78 per cent, including 44 per cent which was very good. It was excellent in eight lessons, spread between five subjects. The quality of teaching was almost the same in Years 7 to 9 and 10 and 11, but particularly effective in Year 7. Pupils' learning closely matched the quality of teaching. All teaching was good in geography, music and physical education, and around two-thirds was very good in English and drama, art, ICT, history, and mathematics. The weak elements of history and mathematics teaching, noted in the last inspection report, have been eradicated.
  27. It is striking how well teachers get on with pupils. The encouraging and constructive relationships teachers generate are a vital element of the many successful lessons. They significantly contribute to pupils' interest, enthusiasm, and hence learning. Pupils behaved very well and worked hard in over 90 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection. In English, a sense of unity and common purpose pervades the classroom. The drama teacher's ease of manner and respect for pupils inspires their confidence. Mathematics teachers accept all pupils' contributions as valuable and invite them to give reasons for their suggestions. This approach clarifies pupils' thoughts and encourages them to speak confidently. Pupils enjoyment of music stems from the teachers' cheerful willingness to turn their hands to most types of music.
  28. Pupils are highly motivated by the physical education teachers' good role models – a valuable combination of enjoyment and professionalism. The enthusiastic geography teachers select individuals carefully for questions, so all pupils are actively involved. History displays celebrate pupils' successes. Pupils appreciate how much the ICT teachers are committed to their learning. The department, including the technician, make equipment and advice available before and after school, so that pupils who do not have home computers are not disadvantaged.
  29. Practically all teachers have very good subject qualifications, experience, knowledge and understanding. The school encourages their continuing professional development (see paragraphs 89 and 90); several have masters degrees. Teachers support the

school's focus on thinking skills and accelerated learning as they are keen to understand and apply the findings from research into how pupils learn. Delivering their specialist language, French and German teachers speak fluently. The drama teacher is master of his subject and knows how to inspire and motivate pupils by making work challenging but fun.

30. Design and technology teachers give engaging, and sometimes inspiring, practical demonstrations. Spontaneous applause broke out after a teacher's demonstration of confectionery skills. Pupils' attention in one of the lowest Year 11 science sets was captured by a demonstration of alkali metals reacting with water. Watching unforgettable explosions, they certainly learnt that hydrogen was produced. The expert music teachers sing extremely well – and so do the pupils. Questions and demonstrations in art are most effective as they make pupils reflect and think about their own work. Specialists deliver the most effective ICT teaching, especially in GCSE classes and where they support ICT in other subjects. The experienced physical education teachers organise a range of activities most competently and confidently.
31. The reasons for the very few lessons when teaching was unsatisfactory, or had weaknesses, are easily identified. In mathematics a teacher provided work that was too easy and in history there was lack of communication between two teachers sharing a class. Poor French speaking in all years is the result of too much English being spoken in lessons; pupils are not encouraged to use French for genuine communication. Teachers often explain grammatical points, or what has to be done, in English. The impact of this is obvious, because pupils hesitate for a long time before they reply to questions. In contrast, in a very good Year 9 German lesson, pupils mastered some quite challenging grammar. The teacher used pictures and actions to make meanings clear.
32. In a few less effective art lessons, the teacher did not check that all pupils were clear about what they were doing, so some made too little progress. Pupils learn too slowly when science teachers do not check what they already know and so waste time repeating basic information. Work tends to be pitched at the same level for all pupils in a class. As noted in the last inspection report, science teachers occasionally hold forth for too long (also seen in geography), which limits the time pupils have to explore their own ideas. Design and technology teachers have high expectations of pupils' practical work but those for design work are not high enough.
33. The very good pace and challenge in all mathematics lessons influence the enthusiastic way in which pupils study. In a lesson on similar triangles, Year 10 pupils took responsibility for how they presented their solutions. The distinguishing features which characterise the very good English teaching are its rigour, challenge, pace and momentum. One teacher made very good use of a series of increasingly probing questions to develop pupils' understanding of Carol Ann Duffy's poem *Mrs Tilscher's Class*. The best geography teaching is characterised by a brisk pace and challenge although in a small number of lessons some lower attainers find the work too hard. Art teachers usually waste no time moving pupils on between tasks.
34. Practically all teachers are fully aware of the importance of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. They teach them well. Many subjects use, or make contributions to, the development of pupils' numeracy skills. The science and mathematics departments work closely together to co-ordinate the style and delivery of these skills. For example, the methods and use of algebra, the presentation of graphs, and when it is best to teach and use various techniques. In several subjects, teachers develop pupils' literacy by using such devices as writing frames and emphasising key technical vocabulary. In



history, pupils have access to dictionaries and see lists of words relevant to the subject. Physical education teachers ask questions specifically to improve pupils' understanding and use of technical terms.

35. As ICT is taught successfully through subjects, teachers are mostly competent and confident. Inevitably the teaching quality varies, depending on the subject and what pupils are doing, but generally it is good. Design and technology teachers use CAD/CAM extremely well. All mathematics teachers use computer projections, white boards, modelling and control extremely well. Such quality visual displays certainly have a positive impact on pupils' learning. English teachers help pupils to design pamphlets or PowerPoint presentations. Geography teachers encourage pupils to use computers, both to improve the appearance of text and graphs and to surf the Internet. Some history learning, but not enough, is extended by project work using the Internet, CD resources and video extracts. Music teachers encourage pupils to compose with computers.
36. Examples of the school's support for gifted and talented pupils are described in paragraphs 48 and 49. Mathematics teachers particularly focus on accelerated learning techniques and thinking skills. Pupils with particular talents in physical education are encouraged to receive extra coaching and to attend events. All pupils cope with the work set in music, but the more musically gifted are not sufficiently stretched to reach higher levels and achieve more. Modern foreign language teachers do not plan extra materials for gifted linguists.
37. It is obvious that pupils enjoy stimulating lessons and many teachers work hard on this aspect. Mathematics teachers focus on the fascination of their subject. The best science lessons have memorable moments. Year 7 pupils were amazed to see a magnet balancing, seemingly in thin air, above another one. A history teacher has devised a simulation exercise on the Industrial Revolution, based on a soccer computer game, in which groups of pupils become mill owners. English teachers produce printed material of a high standard and the geography department produces excellent study guides. Pupils enjoy role-play in modern foreign languages but do not refer to many real French and German magazines or television programmes. A significant number of them are not enthusiastic about learning a language because they cannot see the relevance. The school's approach to ICT is successful because pupils become aware of its applications and relevance. They enjoy using it and state that it helps them to learn. Many use the computer rooms outside school hours to access the Internet and use wordprocessing and desktop publishing.
38. In English lessons, teachers give pupils oral feedback on how well they are learning and they mark, grade and write helpful comments on key pieces of work. Design and technology teachers mark and grade all work thoroughly at the end of each unit of work. History teachers mark homework regularly with helpful comments and end of unit tests with particular thoroughness. Music teachers pay too little attention to checking pupils' progress. Subject teachers rarely set ICT homework or give pupils comments on their ICT performance, whereas one of the strengths of GCSE ICT is the high quality of feedback and discussion. Assessment procedures are good in physical education; teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' progress. Science teachers do not mark work consistently and seldom guide progress with helpful comments. Pupils take little notice of what is written anyway. When science homework is set, it does not strongly emphasise new ideas.
39. For most subjects, pupils with special educational needs are in small classes where their needs are met well through high quality teaching. In an English lesson, well-

chosen, short, but increasingly difficult tasks effectively combined success and challenge. Group work in history develops pupils' self-confidence very well and gives teachers more time to help pupils with special educational needs or language difficulties. In practical subjects pupils are grouped by ability in Years 7 to 9 and mixed groups in Years 10 and 11. Their needs are met through different tasks and good help from the teacher or support assistant. In an art lesson the teacher regularly returned to one pupil, checking progress and setting another small task. The pupil was involved, motivated and successful. In the ARC centre, teachers provide valuable and effective individual support. Describing characters in *Great Expectations*, a pupil was reluctant and uncertain how to start, but the teacher talked about the story and encouraged the pupil to describe the pictures, until there was an active discussion to which the pupil contributed well.

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

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory.
  - The appropriate statutory curriculum is not in place in Years 7 to 9 for art.
  - Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
40. Elements of the National Curriculum for art are not met – using sketchbooks and studying and working with local artists and craftsmen. The breadth and balance of the curriculum offered in some subjects is uneven. Despite a good range of experiences in design and technology, pupils only rarely work with metal in Years 10 to 11. The scheme of work does not show how pupils' design skills should develop and be transferred across the disciplines. This is not helped by the fact that pupils move between specialisms after only a short time with each teacher. Nevertheless, they now use computer-aided design and manufacture in textiles and resistant materials.
41. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study double or single award science. This arrangement, introduced in September 2000, suits pupils in the lower sets as it also allows them to take an extra lesson of English. As all pupils take both English language and literature this is helpful. Nationally almost nine out of ten pupils take double science, but less than six out of ten will at St Wilfrid's; too many of these double science pupils are expected to take the foundation level, rather than the higher level.
42. German is not introduced until Year 9, and then for only one hour a week, for just the top sets. This does not give these pupils a strong enough introduction to the subject before they come to make their GCSE choices. The result is that few take German GCSE. None take two modern foreign languages. With only two GCSE subject choices, on top of all the compulsory ones, some pupils find it difficult to decide which ones to study.
43. The school was one of the first to introduce the vocational GNVQ Part One course in business studies in Years 10 and 11. Because of staffing difficulties in 1999 to 2000 this was changed to GCSE. With the option, from September 2002, to allow pupils to discontinue a foreign language in Year 10, it is right that the school is considering reintroducing vocational courses.
44. The good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme includes all the key topics of drugs awareness, health and safety and sex education. The latter is taught in Year 8, with the support of the school nurse. Year 11 pupils frequently use computers during the PSHE lesson, to complete their record of achievement, so it is difficult for pupils in other years to access the computers to work through, for example,

the recently acquired interactive CD-Rom on drugs. The social worker delivers helpful courses on relationships and stress management.

45. The PSHE programme has been reviewed and extended to include all elements of citizenship, particularly politics and finance, which are compulsory from September 2002. Several of these topics are dealt with by subjects, such as history and religious education. Many outside visitors contribute to the PSHE programme, including a road safety officer, a member of the prison service, the Samaritans, the fire brigade, the local Member of Parliament and a local building society. The PSHE co-ordinator has started a school council and a Year 11 peer mentoring scheme for Year 7 pupils. Both are developing well.
46. The school's focused approach on literacy skills and successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy are described in paragraphs 111, 124 and 125. ICT is successfully taught through subjects in all years, although it is also offered as a GCSE option. Some areas of the ICT curriculum are less attractive to non-specialists, and are therefore under-represented in the balance of pupils' ICT work. For example, Year 8 pupils are given almost identical desktop publishing tasks in English, history and religious education and too little data-handling work.
47. The majority of pupils with special educational needs study the full National Curriculum. One pupil in Year 9 and three in Year 8 are not studying French. The school does not have a specific programme for pupils with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11, although a few have joined the Maren project, which involves the restoration of an old wooden ship, for one day a week. Working responsibly in an adult environment has boosted their confidence and improved their attitude and approach to school life.
48. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is well developed and the breadth of opportunities is wide and increasing. Considerable thought has gone into improving the criteria by which pupils are selected for different activities. The two-week summer course in 2001 involved twenty Year 6 pupils, eleven Year 7 pupils and many past and present Year 11 pupils as mentors. Work included mathematical problems linked to space travel, a visit to the Life Interactive World involving microscope, chromatography and DNA extraction, digital camera, Internet and robotic buggies technology tasks and debate about playing God to create a new race of superhumans. Similarly exciting ideas are in preparation for a Year 6 summer school in 2002, with an increased focus on brain gym, thinking skills and web design.
49. During recent months many events have taken place and all have been evaluated by teachers and pupils, which is very good. The events included:
  - study skills for pupils in Years 9 and 11, described as 'inspirational';
  - thinking skills for pupils in Years 7 to 10, particularly those who do not aim high enough. Their motivation developed and their involvement was 'outstanding';
  - Year 10 masterclasses for pupils with particular gifts in English, music and art;
  - a course which provided insights into the back-stage elements of dance for three girls in Years 10 and 11;
  - a World Music Day for two talented musicians, one of whom described his experiments with African rhythms and jazz as 'absolutely brilliant';
  - a GCSE French conference for 12 Year 10 pupils;
  - two Year 11 pupils wrote essays on ethics which did well in a competition;
  - two Year 11 pupils attended a science course about genetic ethics, which was evaluated as being 'too highbrow and unstimulating'!
  - budding poets in Year 10 attended readings by poets included in the GCSE anthology.

50. The variety of extra-curricular activities on offer is good; very good in music and physical education and excellent in drama. There are several school productions put on in school each year and pupils visit local theatres. In sport there are competitive and recreational activities, which many pupils attend with great enthusiasm and commitment. The physical education department encourages pupils to represent the school in many competitive sports and a number of talented pupils have been selected to play regionally and nationally. The brass band is one of the school's strengths. It is highly respected throughout South Tyneside and former pupils form the backbone of the borough band. For the first time this school year, GCSE art pupils have gone out of school, to visit the Sunderland Glass Museum. Visits and exchanges to France and Germany, so strong in years past, have been discontinued. Pupils hardly ever visit places of scientific or historical interest and fieldwork is not offered in Year 9 geography.
51. Arrangements for careers education and guidance are good. A structured programme begins in Year 9. In Year 10 pupils prepare for a week's work experience. They find this very helpful as an introduction to the world of work. The school is very careful to provide balanced advice and information. Apprenticeship schemes are valued as much as further and higher education. A comprehensive arrangement with the South Tyneside Careers Service provides all Year 11 with careers interviews. It ensures that all pupils with special educational needs follow the best possible courses. It also checks work placements for suitability and safety, although pupils are encouraged to find their own. Representatives from sixth form and further education colleges talk to Year 11 pupils about the courses they offer. They also consult St Wilfrid's when planning their provision, which is good for continuity.
52. Links with local firms are excellent. They sponsor several imaginative, exciting events. During the inspection, Years 10 and 11 pupils received their Key Award certificates, supported by one of the largest firms in South Tyneside. These reward pupils' 'employability' achievements in attendance, work and behaviour. For the second year, pupils are working on the 'Best Business Idea', a South Tyneside Training and Enterprise Corporation initiative. Last year they designed the winning website. Despite having one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, local companies are very keen to come into school to work with pupils to encourage initiative. One pupil was introduced to one of the country's largest computer games designers, on the strength of a prototype he had developed. Business links also work well for those pupils who do not find school a comfortable place. Tyneside Challenge helps ten pupils from each of several schools by giving them extra support and careers guidance.
53. The school has very strong ties with its partner primary schools particularly, but not exclusively, within the Catholic family. The special educational needs co-ordinator joins in Year 6 pupils' final annual reviews, which is excellent practice. Gifted Year 6 primary pupils attend the summer school. Additionally, primary pupils used the ICT and design and technology facilities to complete projects. A science project started in Year 6 is continued in Year 7 at St Wilfrid's. Pupils from a local special school are invited to watch drama productions. The school band and choir perform in a local old people's home. The De La Salle Youth Club, run by an ex-member of staff, is technically separate from the school, but many pupils attend it to take the Mayor's or Duke of Edinburgh's awards. It is a key link with the community. The physical education department has many helpful links with local clubs and trainers.
54. St Wilfrid's status as a Beacon school has prompted several very imaginative schemes which further strengthen subject links between Years 6 and 7. Worthwhile

research into what primary schools wanted support with was carried out and already several successful twilight or Saturday courses have been run. A three-session art course, which included technique practice for batik and stained glass work, was very well received. Primary teachers received a compact disk and could borrow a batik kit (purchased with Beacon money). Two sessions covering the special educational needs new Code of Practice were provided for primary specialists and an evening on Year 9 study skills was offered to pupils and parents. Many other interesting courses are arranged, including mathematics for gifted Year 6 pupils, target setting, and a full day course on dyslexia.

55. Strong links with Newcastle University mean that each year the school welcomes several teacher training pupils. Teachers who mentor these pupils are trained by the university, a valuable part of their own professional development. The school recognises its responsibility to nurture more teachers into the profession. There are other important but lesser links with Northumbria and Sunderland universities.
56. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Assemblies are well-prepared and worthwhile. The strong Catholic ethos, which values everyone, is at the heart of much of the teaching. The religious education department plays a key role in teaching pupils about, and strengthening their tolerance and understanding of, other faiths and ethnic groups. The school supports pupils in their efforts to help others, especially through the Angel Tree mass held at Christmas. Individual subjects, especially mathematics, art, history, geography, music and physical education also contribute well, but opportunities are not mapped or planned across all subjects. The celebration of human achievement is very important. By being given an example of world class achievement in sport, pupils were not only amazed, but also determined in their own efforts.
57. Extra-curricular activities, particularly in drama, music and sport, field trips, theatre visits and retreats, form the basis of the very good provision for social development. Many pupils were involved in a fashion show organised by a Year 11 class. In lessons there are plenty of opportunities for group work so that pupils learn how to live and work together. The respectful way in which all members of the school treat pupils underpins pupils' social and moral development. Protocols in place give pupils an excellent model of morality. In religious education, geography and history, debates, for example about the Industrial Revolution and the Arab/Jewish conflict, give ample opportunity for pupils to consider the rights and wrongs of world affairs. The Catholic faith underpins many questions of behaviour and actions, such as sport in society and the personal privacy issues surrounding data protection. The PSHE programme is a significant element of the school's excellent provision for pupils' moral development.
58. Cultural provision is good with a mix of visits and activities in school which celebrate local culture, such as the very good brass band. Racial tolerance is strongly highlighted in religious education and the PSHE programme. Geography and history certainly address issues of cultural differences and pupils read a wide range of literature in English. The culture of the wider world is recognised through mathematics, for example in Chinese multiplication. Music pupils took part in a gospel singing workshop led by an eminent African musician in Newcastle. Pupils have too little experience of French and German cultures. There is no native speaker of either language on the staff.

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

- Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good.
- Monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is very good.
- Educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are very good.

59. Parents appreciate how very well the school cares for all pupils and that it successfully encourages them to behave well and have positive attitudes to school life. The school's reputation in the community, supported by inspection evidence, is that it provides extremely effective support for all pupils, including those who find learning and school life difficult. Arrangements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pupils are good, although more could be done to ensure that important routines are embedded in day-to-day procedures. There are excellent procedures to promote good behaviour and to eliminate oppressive acts. Over 90 per cent of parents feel the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible, and the inspection team agree. The excellent procedures to support pupils' personal development could hardly be bettered.
60. Heads of year and tutors move up with pupils through the school, so they get to know them really well. The home-school agreement is a realistic and encouraging document. The PSHE programme addresses bullying and stress management issues well, with the pupils' welfare at heart. Determined to offer the best possible support, the ARC centre accepts pupils for *placement*, for a set period of five weeks, *respite*, for just a few lessons and *emergency* for sudden needs.
61. In the last academic year the school has set up a new support centre, based in the chaplaincy, for counselling and community activities. Since the last inspection, a chaplain, a manager for the ARC centre, and a counsellor who is a fully qualified social worker, have been employed. The latter works in school and visits homes to support families as well as individual pupils. Her hours have increased because her work proved so valuable, particularly with girls. The Saint Vincent de Paul group meets regularly to discuss fund-raising activities.
62. The school does a great deal to welcome Year 7 pupils. Year 8 pupils produce a welcome leaflet for Year 6 primary pupils who visit the school. Year 7 pupils write to their former primary schools telling them about their first few weeks at the school. Year 10 pupils accompany St Wilfrid's staff on visits to primary schools and support new pupils when they arrive. Keen to respond to pupils' feelings, the school has made changes to both the way tutor groups are organised and teaching groups are named. Class captains and vice-captains have been reintroduced successfully. Since September 2001 Years 10 and 11 have been allowed to leave the premises during lunchtime. All these examples illustrate that the school is happy to make changes that will give the pupils more confidence. Pupils appreciate the range of awards and certificates offered for good attendance, behaviour and work.
63. The school's procedures and clear expectations combine to make behaviour management very effective. This in no small part is because pupils are encouraged to take ownership of the policy. As some Year 7 pupils explained to the inspectors: they work together to help their colleagues to understand what is expected of them, and that it is unkind to belittle anyone who finds lessons difficult. Throughout the school there is a harmonious atmosphere conducive to learning.
64. Child protection procedures are good. Key members of staff have undergone formal training and teachers have been informed about the most recent changes in the national Code of Practice. The duties and responsibilities of the child protection officer are fully understood by all staff. The school refers to external agencies effectively to support this work. First aid arrangements are satisfactory although the school nurse shares her duties with other members of staff in various departments. The first aid room is quite far away from the front entrance, which is not ideal; pupils who are not well wait in the entrance hall to be fetched to go home.

65. Arrangements to conduct risk assessments are unsatisfactory and in some key departments they are either conducted in too informal a manner or not often enough. A member of staff co-ordinates health and safety arrangements but this falls short of actually managing internal arrangements to be sure they happen properly. The governing body, in its capacity as employer, has not recently reviewed the autonomy they have given to the headteacher regarding residential and day visits.
66. Teachers with pastoral responsibilities and the education welfare officer work well together, monitoring and improving attendance, following up unexplained absences and devising strategies for families whose children do not attend regularly. The vast majority of parents works closely with the school to ensure their children attend regularly and give reasons for absence. A small hard core of about 30 families do not see this as a high priority; this accounts for the unauthorised absence figures. The school is poised to record and analyse attendance electronically. When this is established, the management of attendance can be handed over to an administrative assistant.
67. Pupils with special educational needs succeed because work is planned carefully for them. Individual education plans have clear targets that are challenging but attainable, such as to improve a pupil's reading age by six months in the four months before the next review. Pupils who find lessons difficult are supported by skilled assistants or learning mentors in the classroom, and/or encouraged to spend time in the ARC centre. Teachers support the centre and report on how it improves many pupils' behaviour and attitude.
68. Overall department procedures to assess pupils' attainment and progress are good, particularly in art and GCSE ICT. In Year 7, the school uses Year 6 national test results and a wide range of internal tests to group pupils in ability bands, within which English, mathematics and science create ability sets. All this information, plus Year 9 national test, school examination, predicted grades and GCSE results, is made available to heads of departments. It also helps to set targets, for pupils and the school as a whole, and to determine which pupils have special educational needs. Excellent 'concern' sheets are available for teachers to further identify pupils whose needs may not relate to learning difficulties.
69. On the whole, departments use this wealth of statistical information well to consider and plan their schemes of work and teaching. English and mathematics teachers are more precise than science teachers in their planning for individual pupils. The modern foreign languages department does not use this information to plan courses but the recently appointed acting head of department has introduced effective assessment procedures. A few departments, for example history and music, do not relate their assessments to National Curriculum levels or GCSE criteria. As ICT specialist staff do not teach Year 7 pupils, they cannot use their expertise to assess attainment on entry: hence measuring progress is difficult. In Years 7 to 9, pupils do not know how well they are doing in ICT.
70. In most other subjects, pupils know how well they are doing and they are generally aware of what they must do to improve their work. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 understand their target grades. The school has worked hard to make target setting clear and useful for pupils. In addition to the wealth of quantitative data, the school rightly 'draws on a range of qualitative information about the pupils as learners', for example any special talents or external social factors that may impact on their progress. Pupils' targets are reviewed four times during the two GCSE years and time is allocated for them to review progress with their allocated teacher mentors. All this is good practice.

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

- Parents' views of the school are very positive.
71. Parents believe that the school expects high standards. The inspectors agree. A few parents feel that that they are not told clearly how their children are getting on. The information parents receive about pupils' progress is variable. Annual reports are not consistent in the amount of detail they contain. For example, not all subjects say if the pupils' predicted progress for the year has been achieved. Few give information about standards related to descriptions of National Curriculum levels. Pupils confirm that this is also rarely the case when teachers review progress with them. Parents of pupils in Years 10 and 11 receive helpful sheets summarising past performance and target grades.
  72. The inspection confirmed parents' concerns that the amount of time allocated for parents' evenings is too short and that they are also held too early after school, when many parents are still working. The school knows the timing and arrangements for parents' evenings need to change. The arrangements to contact parents when a pupils' behaviour is not acceptable are good. On the rare occasions that a pupil is temporarily excluded, parents and pupils are invited to meet teachers to discuss the best way forward.
  73. The prospectus and the governors' annual report provide the information required by law but the governors do not write any articles for their report. Consequently it is not possible to deduce what understanding they have of the performance of the school in comparison to other similar ones, or what plans they have for the school's long-term direction.
  74. A few parents noted that pupils in the lower ability sets are not given enough homework. The inspectors agree that some subjects set homework more regularly than others, and occasionally it does not take pupils very long to complete. An important consideration is that teachers do not always check that pupils have written the homework down in their diaries. Some pupils fill gaps by writing down what they did in a lesson, rather than the homework. During the inspection homework was set regularly and most of it was worthwhile.
  75. The parent teacher association very actively and enthusiastically supports the school by organising social and fund-raising events. At some of its formal meetings the school informs and consults parents about future plans. These discussions also ensure that funds raised are used for significant, tangible projects. The provision of electronic teaching aids in the design and technology department is one such recent example.
  76. The school holds information evenings for the parents of children with special educational needs, to ensure that they are both aware of what the school does for their children, and how this conforms to the Code of Practice. Parents are very supportive; the new co-ordinator has every confidence that the majority will attend their children's annual reviews and many turned up to a recent information evening. Parents are confident they can contact the special educational needs co-ordinator if they have any concern.
  77. In 2001 the school commissioned a private consultant to undertake detailed research into what parents thought about the school. The lengthy questionnaires were analysed



in great detail. The school has already responded to several key points which emerged, and has plans to address more in the future. This was a worthwhile exercise.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good.
  - The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
  - The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance and taking effective action are good.
  - The strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding, is very good.
  - The principles of best value are applied very well.
78. The headteacher gives thoughtful, sensitive and firm leadership based on his strong insight into the school's strengths and areas for development. He is well respected and generates confidence in teachers, pupils and parents. He is very well supported by the recently restructured, and most competent, senior management team and many hardworking middle managers. Members of the senior management team have worked for the school loyally for many years. Their roles and responsibilities are now clear, so management has improved since the last inspection.
79. Most heads of department are effective leaders, particularly in English, mathematics, ICT, geography, music and physical education. Leadership and management of the modern foreign languages department are unsatisfactory and the art department is in a state of transition. The science department is emerging from a difficult two-year period. During this time the head of department has not provided the necessary drive to raise standards, although changes in the department's structure and delegated responsibilities have greatly benefited its management; the department is moving in the right direction to tackle underachievement. The heads of year are caring and diligent and focus on the right priorities, for example tackling poor attendance by a small group of Year 11 pupils. Heads of year have too little free time to carry out their duties.
80. The co-ordinator for provision for gifted and talented pupils, appointed a few months before the inspection, has taken up the reins energetically and is realistic about the problems of selection, and the effectiveness of different courses. The Beacon school co-ordinator is equally enthusiastic and making sure that worthwhile programmes are provided for primary school teachers, parents and pupils as well as St Wilfrid's parents and pupils. The PSHE co-ordinator is improving the programme, to make it as interesting as possible, as well as incorporating elements of citizenship. Since September 2001 the new careers education and guidance co-ordinator has reviewed the careers programme for Years 8 to 11, improved links with South Tyneside College and introduced a work-related training programme.
81. The school appointed a new, very experienced, highly qualified and committed special educational needs co-ordinator in September 2001. Her excellent handbook includes a very clear rationale for the allocation of support assistants, which is good practice. She is a very good manager, but as she teaches all the lower set English and mathematics lessons, most successfully, she has too little time to complete the essential administrative tasks, such as the transitional reviews and to formally meet with the five committed support assistants, which is essential for the transfer of information. Also, support assistants do not keep record books to chart the progress of pupils towards their set targets. The unsatisfactory areas of special educational needs provision, noted in the last inspection report, have improved significantly. The benefits of the ARC centre are described in paragraphs 60 and 67.

82. The school has a wealth of performance measures and data generated by national and internal tests and GCSEs. This information is presented meticulously by an assistant headteacher and teachers acknowledge how helpful she is in explaining the details to them. Several departments use this information intelligently to monitor pupils' progress and achievement but overall the drive to improve results by responding to all this information is not intense enough. The admirable wealth of data is not distilled and refined enough to make it easy for all teachers to use. School documents acknowledge that 'the outcomes must become more sophisticated and effective'.
83. In the last few years the senior management team has made great strides in self-evaluation. This is now regular at whole school level and getting better at department level. What is not so effective is the layout of department development plans and how they fit into the whole school plan. Both lack clarity and precision and the school acknowledges these as areas for further work. The four priorities for the present year's school development plan are the right ones, though the actions to be taken are more detailed than what should result.
84. The governing body is most supportive of the school and takes its responsibilities seriously. It is proud that the school's reputation continues to grow. Between them, governors bring a good range of expertise to their work – with experience in surveying and business, for example. The chair has a wide educational background. Most governors are linked with subjects or other important areas, but with work commitments many find it difficult to visit the school during the day. The special educational needs department is very well supported by a governor who is experienced in this area of provision. The chair of governors continues to chair the committees, a point raised in the last inspection, because others are not keen to volunteer. There is no curriculum committee so, although the full governing body has considered the place of vocational education, it did not debate the separate, single and double science issue in any depth. A few governors attend staff training days, which is good.
85. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good and the school is in a strong position to carry on developing well. Of the nine issues raised in the last report six have been dealt with fully. The school has maintained its commendable features, the special educational needs policy is in line with statutory requirements, history results have improved, areas of weakness in teaching have been eradicated, planning is realistic and well linked to financial considerations and the senior management team is now most effective and monitoring the school well. The issue about the poor quality of the library will undoubtedly be tackled when the new City Learning Centre is complete. The remaining issues, about resources and the deployment of teaching staff, continue to be areas of development, although for different reasons. Most departments have made at least as much progress as might be expected in six years, or have caught up since September 2001. In the last three years the modern foreign languages department has stagnated and art and science have not really evolved enough.
86. The school has a good blend of well-qualified and experienced teachers. Since the last inspection teacher recruitment has become more difficult in several subjects. As it has to use part-time and/or non-specialist teachers, a small number of classes are taught by two teachers during a week, in history, geography and mathematics. This arrangement has an adverse effect on standards in history, and particularly in mathematics where a similar situation was reported as unsatisfactory at the last inspection. The design and technology teachers' specialisms shapes the curriculum on offer to pupils. The long-term absence of the head of modern foreign languages has led to other members of the department working outside their specialist language.

87. There are too few support staff. As at the last inspection, there is no librarian, although one will be appointed on the completion of the City Learning Centre and no design and technology technician, although an appointment is imminent. The hours of technical support in science and ICT are low. This deficiency places additional demands on teachers in all these departments. There are no foreign language assistants to provide pupils with contact with native French and German speakers.
88. Induction arrangements for teachers are excellent. Statutory requirements for newly qualified teachers are fully met and taken further by the school's own initiatives. Any other new staff have a negotiated individual programme according to their needs. Performance management procedures are well established. All eligible teachers have attended New Opportunities Fund ICT training and 70 per cent have completed the course. Special educational needs support staff have received valuable training and more, in specific areas such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, is planned.
89. The management and impact of professional development are strengths of the school. Training responds to whole school and departmental priorities, and to areas identified through performance management. All teachers have an individual staff development profile. It is notable that the training teachers have received on accelerated learning and thinking skills has begun to permeate through into lessons.
90. A particular feature of teachers' development is the extended opportunities created through the EiC gifted and talented programme and Beacon school activity. In addition to accompanying pupils to gifted and talented activities, where they pick up many interesting ideas, teachers also attend training and workshops specifically addressing ways they can improve their teaching for these pupils. The head of mathematics referred to his 'inspirational course which gave him a wealth of ideas'. All teachers share their ideas with their colleagues. Teachers who prepare courses for the Beacon school programme are undoubtedly improving their own teaching skills and learning from the participants, which is excellent professional development.
91. Since the last inspection the accommodation has improved, creating significantly better rooms for several subjects, so that teaching and learning are more stimulating and enjoyable. The completely refurbished design and technology area is most attractive and well-equipped but it has too little storage space. One science laboratory has been modernised, the drama room restyled, and the mathematics rooms located close together. The school has completed external redecoration, replacement of furniture and fittings and built a new toilet block, as well as following a successful rolling programme of internal decoration and improved display areas.
92. A realistic long-term plan, well managed by a member of the senior management team, clearly identifies further developments. One of these, the City Learning Centre, will be completed for the next academic year. This will, at last, give the school a better library and proper music rooms; both are poor at present. The buildings, and six demountable classrooms, are clean and tidy and the grounds are free of litter. However, the hard surface areas and walkways continue to vary in condition. Although the school has limited wheelchair access and no toilet for the disabled, and teaching, office, and storage space are tight, overall its accommodation is adequate. The exceptions are in modern foreign languages, art and special educational needs and plans exist for all of these.
93. The school knows that the ARC centre, shared with the special educational needs department, is not ideal for pupils who have serious behaviour problems. These pupils

need space to separate themselves from others and an area in which to relax, as well as a place in which to work. The room used for lower set lessons and group work for pupils with special educational needs is a most awkward shape. The special educational needs co-ordinator does not have a separate office so she cannot perform her role effectively. This is essential, as she cannot make confidential telephone calls and has to keep confidential documents in locked filing cabinets, which are presently spread around the room. Resources are stored in a history department cupboard, which makes access difficult. Plans to resite the department do address these deficiencies.

94. The school's expenditure on resources, five per cent of the basic budget, is only slightly better than the three per cent noted in the previous inspection. It is still at the lower end of the national average. The quality and quantity of resources, although very good in English and drama, are unsatisfactory overall because of deficiencies in art, history, modern foreign languages, special educational needs and the library. The main weakness is a shortage of textbooks, a lack of additional reference books in art and history, and too little ICT special educational needs software. In design and technology low funding restricts the materials bought, which limits pupils' experiences of metal, for example. The physical education department has no digital or video camera, so pupils cannot analyse body movement. Videos and televisions are kept centrally, which affects the breadth of teaching methods used. The ratio of computers to pupils is just below average, but the computers have been upgraded and three rooms are equipped with interactive electronic whiteboards. The City Learning Centre will bring a welcome boost to modern ICT resources and increase the number of computers and books in the library.
95. Confronted by below average income, the school has maintained a prudent financial regime. Financial controls are good with clear, well-administered procedures. The most recent and very detailed auditor's report was positive. Issues raised have been remedied fully, most notably in documenting roles, responsibilities and procedures in financial and other administrative activities. The school has retained a surplus of funds in recent years, equivalent to 2.5 per cent of annual income. Under-funded over a number of years, the school's income has now improved considerably as a result of changes in local education authority funding procedures and the school's success in tapping into income from many local and national initiatives.
96. The use of specific grants obtained through initiatives such as EiC, Beacon school, the City Learning Centre and the New Opportunities Fund is excellent. The impact of such funding is immediately apparent, from the very energetic work done to develop programmes to support gifted and talented pupils, the widespread contacts being developed with partner primary schools, to the valuable work of the ARC centre. Taking advice from other Beacon schools, it was decided to pay teachers to prepare and run twilight and Saturday courses rather than pay for their supply cover during the day. This was a sensible decision. In leading these initiatives, and the very well-planned programme for other capital developments, the headteacher maintains a clear commitment to a genuinely comprehensive ideal. The spending plans do not benefit one group of pupils or one subject at the expense of another, but rather spread the benefits among all. The diocese supports the school well in planning and financing new developments.
97. Educational priorities are therefore mostly well-supported through the school's financial planning. However, the school does not have an effective enough system for all departments to clarify the key resources they need to senior management and governors. Decisions about how resources are allocated lack transparency, so they

are not understood by all heads of department. As a consequence, some heads of department lack faith in the process, and those who are weaker at development and financial planning tend to end up with too few resources. Heads of department do not systematically make presentations to governors, and few governors manage to visit their link subjects, so they do not debate issues about how funds are allocated to departments enough.

98. Principles of best value are applied very well. The school operates rigorous price scrutiny and tendering processes for all its contracts and very actively consults with experts on the best ways to take forward new developments. The expertise of individual governors is used frequently. In the case of the City Learning Centre, the school has employed a consultant and the headteacher has visited many existing similar centres, to determine best practice. The school clearly recognises the role it is keen to play, to provide education in South Tyneside. The headteacher is actively involved in reshaping local provision, working with the local education authority, to develop ICT in local schools.
99. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are average. Their attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and statements is below average. Standards of attainment and achievement are above average overall. When the good achievement of pupils, their very good personal development and the good quality of education are set against the below average unit cost of their education, the school gives good value for money.

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

100. In order to improve standards and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:
- 1) Raise standards in French by:
    - providing strong support for the acting head of department and addressing the long-term leadership situation;
    - improving teaching and, in particular, reducing the amount of English used in lessons.(paragraphs 188 to 198)
  - 2) Improve pupils' progress, and therefore GCSE science results by:
    - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve;
    - encouraging pupils to develop and apply their own ideas;
    - using investigation procedures during class experiments;
    - reviewing whether more pupils should be entered for the higher tier GCSE level;
    - introducing a greater range of teaching styles.(paragraphs 126 to 135)
  - 3) Review and improve those aspects of the curriculum which are not satisfactory, with particular reference to:
    - increasing the number of pupils who take dual award science;
    - considering the benefit of introducing German as a second language only in Year 9;
    - altering the timing and balance of the different areas in design and technology in Years 7 to 9;
    - introducing the missing statutory elements of art in Years 7 to 9;
    - evaluating how many pupils do not get their first choice options in design and technology GCSE and introducing changes to improve this.

(paragraphs 40, 41, 42, 134, 137, 141, 147, 151, 154)

4) Increase resources by:

- purchasing more textbooks in history and design and technology and more textbooks, reference books and sketchbooks in art;
- persevering with all plans to have an up-to-date and well-stocked library and a librarian.

(paragraphs 94, 137, 141, 155, 175)

5) Improve health and safety procedures by:

- reviewing the policy;
- carrying out annual risk assessments, particularly in physical education, design and technology and science;
- collating and monitoring risk assessments centrally;
- formally nominating a member of the governing body to be responsible for reviewing all aspects of health and safety;
- addressing all minor health and safety issues raised during the inspection.

(paragraphs 65, 135, 155, 210)

In addition to the above, the governors and senior management team could also consider the following minor issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- Developing the links between departments and the whole school development plans. (paragraph 83)
- Clarify the allocation of funds to departments so it is transparent and understood by all. (paragraph 97)
- Introducing a curriculum committee in the governing body. (paragraph 84)
- Reviewing the timetable to reduce the number of classes taught by two teachers and/or non-specialists. (paragraphs 86, 120, 122, 134, 170, 197)
- Increasing the amount of free time heads of year have to carry out their duties. (paragraphs 79, 81)
- Too few support staff. (paragraph 87)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	160
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	67

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	8	62	55	30	5	0	0
Percentage	5	39	34	19	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	915
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	143

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	129

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

Authorised absence

%
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Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	7.5
National comparative data	8.1

School data	0.7
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	105	77	182

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	78	74	81
	Girls	66	58	55
	Total	144	132	136
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (83)	73 (72)	75 (68)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	41 (41)	37 (42)	34 (26)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	87	73	71
	Girls	67	61	54
	Total	154	134	125
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (80)	74 (74)	69 (60)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (42)	49 (47)	30 (18)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	81	87	168

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	39	79	79
	Girls	42	86	86
	Total	81	165	165
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (54)	98 (98)	98 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	42

per pupil	National	39
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	3
Indian	10
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	888
Any other minority ethnic group	8

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	31	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	55.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### **Education support staff: Y7 - Y11**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	333

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 - Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	70.4
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 to Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	20.9

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.7

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	2,114,855
Total expenditure	2,085,657
Expenditure per pupil	2,323
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,674
Balance carried forward to next year	51,872

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	915
Number of questionnaires returned	379

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	54	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	51	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	54	3	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	3	1	3
The teaching is good.	38	54	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	53	4	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	45	4	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	51	19	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	44	48	3	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	51	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	45	15	3	12

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

**ENGLISH**

Overall the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Above average Year 9 test results overall and high GCSE standards.
- Consistently good and often very good teaching.
- Very good quality leadership and management.
- Respectful and co-operative relationships at all levels.

Areas for improvement

- The small amount of teaching which is not challenging and rigorous.
- Development planning that lacks the detail and provision needed to raise standards of teaching and learning even further.

101. Year 9 pupils attained an above average point score in the 2001 national tests. The 79 per cent of pupils who reached the expected level was well above average, with the above average percentage at the higher levels exceeding the teachers' predicted levels. All results were well above average compared to similar schools. Boys outperformed boys nationally by a greater margin than the girls achieved. The results were similar to those obtained at the time of the last inspection but slightly down on the trend of recent years because of the ability profile of the year. That trend has seen standards at well above average levels, higher than those in mathematics and science. The standards attained by pupils with special educational needs and by pupils for whom English is an additional language were also high.
102. All pupils take GCSE English language and literature, which is commendable. In both subjects in 2001, 71 per cent of pupils attained grades A\*-C, well above average for boys and girls. All pupils attained grades A\*-G in English language and very nearly all did in English literature. In particular, the performance of the boys in English language, compared to boys nationally, was very good. In English language, 15 per cent of pupils attained A\*/A grades, compared to 12 per cent nationally, and the percentage of B grades was equally impressive. Results have significantly improved since the last inspection, when they were just below average. The trend over recent years has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils attaining higher grades, which did not dip, as many other subjects did, in 2001. Results were much higher than those obtained in mathematics and science.
103. Standards of Year 9 work seen are above average and reflect the picture given by the test results. This is because of the good teaching and the very positive attitudes pupils have to their work. They write fluently at length and adapt their style for different purposes. Such writing is usually well structured and presented with care. Top set pupils' descriptive writing is particularly good because they use an extensive range of vocabulary to convey contrasts and highlight comparisons. In one of the middle sets, pupils wrote imaginative crime reports which contained convincing detail, ordered chronologically. Pupils in the lowest set produced particularly good work on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. They wrote with reasonable levels of accuracy on the plot and could explain the personality traits of the main characters. Pupils' skills in two aspects of written work are not fully developed. They find it difficult to write direct speech and many do not use a sufficient variety of sentence structures.

104. Current Year 11's written work is well above average in both language and literature. As in Year 9, the teaching and pupils' attitudes underpin these standards. Pupils' analytical work is particularly strong, especially in their writing on set texts. Pupils express ideas clearly, explain their significance and then exemplify them with textual references. Year 11 pupils explained the use of allegory and rhetoric in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* well and illustrated their use in key passages. Pupils' planning and drafting skills are well developed and they use ICT confidently and proficiently to present work. The same Year 11 pupils used computers to record their observations on the unfolding of the plot in that novel and the significance of the principal characters. Standards of punctuation and spelling are generally good but a minority of pupils do not use grammar correctly.
105. Pupils read well in all years and a wide range of increasingly demanding texts as they progress through the school. They read aloud confidently and fluently and give accurate explanations of the main points of a text. From their reading of *Of Mice and Men*, Year 11 pupils understood how John Steinbeck used dreams to symbolise the hopes and aspirations of the main characters. Pupils read critically and identify and explain techniques used to convey a meaning or message. Year 8 pupils understood the advertisers' use of slogan and repetition in newspaper and magazine advertisements, and explained how they were intended to persuade a particular readership.
106. All pupils speak with confidence and good articulation and show respect by listening to what others have to say. As a result they learn well. They adapt their speech as a situation demands, moving from standard English in debate or presentations, to colloquial expressions when discussing their work in groups. Year 7 pupils explained clearly, and at length, the different techniques used by cartoonists, narrative writers and dramatists. They used technical language accurately and described and illustrated examples of each genre. Although desperate to get a chance to speak, those not chosen merely sighed and settled to listen to their more fortunate classmates. This enthusiasm for talking about work was seen throughout the school and contributes significantly to their personal development.
107. By the end of Year 9 pupils' achievement is good and by the end of Year 11 it is very good. The standards attained in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above what would have been expected from the same pupils' Year 9 performance. Equally high rates of achievement and progress were seen during the inspection. The key factors in all years are the quality of teaching and the pupils' attitude to their work. Pupils learn well in lessons because they are keen to understand and make progress and because their teachers know their strengths and weaknesses and adapt work accordingly.
108. The quality of the teaching is a strength. It was good and often very good in all lessons, apart from one – and that lesson was satisfactory. Thirty per cent of teaching in Years 7 to 9, and over 60 per cent in Years 10 and 11 was very good, accounting for the well above average standards in these years. The distinguishing features which characterise the very good teaching are its rigour and challenge. The teacher made very good use of a series of increasingly probing questions to develop pupils' understanding of Carol Ann Duffy's poem *Mrs Tilscher's Class*. He posed supplementary questions when answers were superficial and so encouraged pupils to reflect more deeply on the poem's theme, and then expand their answers. As a result of this demanding approach, pupils explained the awakening curiosity of the young child and supplied textual references as illustrations. The challenge facing the department is to ensure that all teaching is as intellectually demanding as the very best, and that all staff use techniques to stimulate and stretch pupils.

109. Teachers are well qualified and know their subject well. They plan lessons with care and take account of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those few for whom English is an additional language. They pay particular attention to the quality of resources and spend time producing printed material of a high standard. One particularly strong feature is the relationships, founded on respect and co-operation, which teachers have built with the pupils. Teachers explain learning objectives clearly at the start of every lesson and use varied techniques to inject pace and momentum. In lessons, they give pupils oral feedback on how well they are learning and each term they mark, grade and write constructive comments on key pieces of work, showing pupils how they are progressing over time and how their work could be improved. Teachers effectively ensure that pupils develop their literacy and ICT skills. The contribution the subject makes to pupils' personal development, in terms of their moral and social awareness, is considerable. Although not prominent in the schemes of work, pupils do read literature from other cultures and at times reflect on spiritual matters.
110. Leadership and management are very good. The hardworking head of department provides clear educational direction for his supportive colleagues and a sense of unity and common purpose carries over into the classroom. Teaching is monitored systematically and colleagues new to the school and profession are well supported. In addition to the improvement in standards since the last inspection, pupils' targets, now challenging but attainable, and diagnostic aspects of marking, are better. The department is now much better resourced although a central base is still needed. A high standard of decoration and displays contributes to the positive learning atmosphere. A wide range of extra-curricular activities helps pupils to develop their understanding and enjoyment of the subject. The one area that needs attention is the development plan. This lacks detail, defined areas of responsibility, costings in terms of time and money, and criteria for evaluating success. The department has the capacity for further improvement because of the teachers' commitment to professional development.

**The effectiveness of the provision to develop pupils' literacy skills is good**

111. Pupils write well. They use an extensive vocabulary and write in a range of styles suited to the subjects being studied. Pupils' good reading means they understand the range of texts they meet in all subjects. As a result of the co-ordinator's work and the support she receives from colleagues, the promotion of high literacy standards now has a strong profile throughout the school. Teachers take account of pupils' literacy needs when they plan lessons; many examples of good practice were seen. In science, key words are introduced and explained and teachers check pupils' writing for spelling and sentence structures. Mathematics teachers have a very positive approach to literacy and promote accurate use of technical language. Geography, history, religious education and PSHE provide numerous opportunities for wide reading and discussion. In physical education, pupils use technical language competently and fluently when evaluating performance. The newly appointed art teacher has incorporated language for learning in all her schemes of work and in history, key words and names are displayed prominently at the start of lessons.

**MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

**Strengths**

- Very good teaching.

- Leadership which shows clear direction for improvement.
- Teachers' shared determination to develop pupils' appreciation of the fascination of mathematics.
- Good relationships and support so all pupils participate fully in lessons.

#### Areas for improvement

- Pupils who do not achieve their full potential.
- Too few specialist teachers to teach all classes.
- The quality of development and support documentation.

112. Present Year 7 pupils entered the school with above average attainment, those in other years had slightly lower attainment – about average for the present Year 11. A combination of the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 7 to 9 and the new (September 2001) head of department's focused leadership means that teaching and learning are improving, particularly evident in Year 7.
113. In the 2001 Year 9 tests, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level was above average and well above the average for similar schools, as it has been for several years. At the higher levels, the proportion against both measures was average. The average point score was average and above average compared to similar schools. Some pupils, particularly higher attainers, underachieved compared to their ability on entry to the school. Results in mathematics were below those in English and similar to science. Girls attained better than boys for the first time, and better than the national difference between boys and girls.
114. GCSE results in 2001 were just below average. The percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades has hardly changed since the last inspection. The average point score, which has been consistently average, was marginally below average in 2001. Analysis of individual pupils' performance showed over half the pupils slightly underachieved. In these examinations boys attained better than girls. The differences in boys' and girls' results, in the Year 9 tests and the GCSE examinations, were not significant. Contributory factors to the underachievement in both examinations were the lack of challenge in some teaching and the disruptive effects of refurbishment work to provide new mathematics rooms. During this five month period up to three classes at a time had lessons in the school hall. This reduced the quality of pupils' learning and examination preparation.
115. Since September 2001, many developments have reversed the declining trend. Standards of attainment and achievement indicate an improving department. In Years 7 to 9 the standard of work seen during lessons and in pupils' books is above average and improving; pupils achieve very well. Their work shows pupils of all abilities are making the same very good progress. Year 7 pupils have benefited significantly from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools and St Wilfrid's. They work out mental arithmetic tasks more rapidly and confidently than many older pupils. Pupils' thinking and problem solving skills have improved since September 2001. Whilst the drive to raise these aspects was initially targeted at gifted and talented pupils, the strategies have influenced all pupils' learning.
116. During a Year 7 lesson investigating number patterns and symmetry, pupils showed good understanding of algebraic expressions and very good understanding of patterns. They also learned how to tackle investigations systematically. In a Year 8 lower set lesson, pupils used computers confidently. They predicted the shape produced by a simple series of instructions. By the end of the lesson, they all produced repeated patterns, and understood well how their instructions and the properties of common shapes were related.



117. By Year 9, most top set pupils work at high levels successfully, using trigonometry, rules of indices, statistics and Pythagoras' theorem, in realistic situations. In a Year 9 lesson on Pythagoras' theorem, pupils progressed rapidly from basic calculations to its application in different situations. Lower set pupils in Year 9 study work which is challenging, including volumes of prisms, areas of compound shapes, simple equations and graphs drawn in all four quadrants. During a lesson they made good progress evaluating algebraic expressions by substituting values. Some pupils, however, have difficulty remembering the difference between 'x squared' and '2x'.
118. In Years 10 and 11 attainment is average and pupils, particularly in the upper and lower sets, achieve well and make good progress. Project work shows further evidence that their analytical skills are improving. Their coursework shows they clearly understand how to analyse problems, and they use diagrams, ICT and algebra effectively to present their conclusions. By the end of Year 11, higher attainers calculate standard deviations most competently and lower attainers can find factors of numbers up to 100 accurately. During a Year 11 lesson, higher attainers revised their knowledge of trigonometry and Pythagoras' theorem, and tackled problems on bearings. Although they had some difficulty recollecting basic facts, the teacher guided them well so they soon applied formulae and diagrams skilfully. A few Year 11 pupils attend booster lessons to improve their GCSE performance.
119. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make very good progress. They are very well supported by teachers and, on occasion, by skilled classroom assistants. During a Year 7 lesson they made very good progress and moved from simply recognising the reflective symmetry within a shape, to being able to construct images of given shapes. Pupils who enter the school with below Level 4 attainment attend helpful 'springboard' sessions in Year 7. Practically all the pupils with special educational needs attain a GCSE grade because the work they do is challenging. Support for gifted pupils is built into lessons, with a particular focus on accelerated learning techniques and thinking skills. Gifted pupils enter the Leeds University Mathematics Challenge.
120. Teaching is very good. During the inspection it was good in 85 per cent of lessons, including over 60 per cent which was very good. Only in one lesson, where a supply teacher provided work which was too easy, was teaching unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they exploit to provide well planned lessons which include numerous opportunities to extend pupils' learning. This was observed in a Year 7 lesson on translations, in which pupils rapidly grasped the concept and then determined inverse mappings. During the lesson the teacher reinforced pupils' understanding of common polygons and solids by skilful questioning.
121. The very good pace and challenge in all lessons transfers to the enthusiastic way in which pupils study. In a Year 10 lesson on similar triangles, pupils worked rapidly and took responsibility for the way they presented their solutions. Pupils experience and enjoy a wide variety of learning styles. A significant feature is the teachers' shared determination to develop pupils' appreciation of the fascination of mathematics. This is evident in their enthusiastic teaching and the stimulating displays in all rooms. These include tessellating forms, impossible shapes, the value of pi stretching around two walls and other mathematical patterns; these certainly nurture the awe and wonder of the subject. In addition all teachers use computer projections, overhead projectors and whiteboards extremely well, at the right times. These quality visual displays certainly have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Combined with an encouraging atmosphere, very good relationships have developed out of this teaching approach. Teachers treat

all pupils' views as valuable contributions and invite them to give reasons for their suggestions. These both clarify pupils' thoughts and give them opportunities to develop their oral skills.

122. The new head of department has very good management and leadership skills and the direction for future improvement is now clear. Management documentation does not yet fully support these proposed developments. Following the recent refurbishment, accommodation and resources are good; the department now has a well equipped suite of adjacent rooms where it can develop its identity and ethos for learning. Staffing is unsatisfactory, because supply and non-specialist teachers have to be used. The main impact of this is that a significant number of classes have more than one teacher, so learning is not seamless. There is too little documentary support for, and monitoring of, these teachers – needed to improve continuity.
123. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Leadership, teaching, resources and accommodation have all improved significantly this school year. The department has used many local and national initiatives to boost pupils' learning: EiC funds to develop gifted, and indirectly, all pupils', learning; Neighbourhood Renewal funds to provide booster classes for Level 4/5 borderline Year 9 pupils and training funds from gaining Beacon school status. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced into Years 7 to 9. As a result, standards and achievement are improving.

### **The effectiveness of the provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills is good**

124. In general, pupils' numeracy skills are good and support their learning in all subjects. Years 7 to 9 pupils have better skills than those in Years 10 and 11 due to the positive effects of the National Numeracy Initiative. The school has a policy about how numeracy must be taught and also a realistic action plan. All staff have been trained and individual departments are planning to introduce more opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills. Many subjects use, or make contributions to, the development of pupils' numeracy skills. The science department works closely with the mathematics department to co-ordinate the style and delivery of the numeracy skills required in both subjects. This collaboration includes the methods and use of algebra, the presentation of graphs and when various techniques should be introduced.
125. Geography lessons provide pupils with opportunities to present data in a variety of forms, such as scatter graphs and pie charts. In their coursework studies, top set pupils in Years 10 and 11 employ sophisticated analysis of data. Design and technology subjects make a strong contribution to pupils' numeracy skills by developing accurate drawing and measuring. In food technology, for example, pupils weigh and calculate proportions accurately to prepare recipes. They produce a variety of statistical diagrams when presenting results of their surveys. In GCSE ICT lessons, pupils used computer software to analyse profit and loss accounts. In modern foreign language lessons, pupils count and use time and dates in French or German. History teachers require Year 8 pupils to use many mathematical techniques when they simulate factory developments during the industrial revolution.

## **SCIENCE**

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Strengths**

- Teachers' good subject expertise.
- Good development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

- Links with primary schools and building on this curriculum.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of their target levels.

#### Areas for improvement

- Below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement in Years 10 and 11. Low expectations of what pupils can achieve and slow progress, combined with lack of leadership drive to tackle these issues.
- The limited teaching styles and use of investigation during class experiments.
- Inconsistent homework and marking.
- Identification of specific learning targets for individual pupils.
- The low numbers taking double science and the small proportion being entered at the higher tier.

126. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected level in the 2001 Year 9 tests was above average. The percentage attaining the higher levels, and the overall point score, were average. The latter has improved a little each year since 1999. Boys' and girls' results were similar. Results were close to those in mathematics but not as good as those in English. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average. They represent satisfactory progress in relation to pupils' standards on entry to the school.
127. The percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in the 2001 double award GCSE was well below average. Boys' results were below average and girls' well below. However, all attained a grade. Twenty-four pupils took GCSE in the separate sciences. They attained average biology, but just below average chemistry and physics grades A\*-C. A notable, and improved, percentage attained grade B in biology. Considering all the science courses together, results at grades A\*-C were below average. When compared to levels achieved at the end of Year 9, progress was variable, but unsatisfactory overall.
128. Standards seen overall are above average in Year 9. In relation to standards on entry, achievement and progress are mainly satisfactory. Although higher attainers make better progress than middle attainers, both, on occasions learn slowly. They do work pitched at too low a level and do not apply their own ideas often enough. On too many occasions pupils merely complete gaps in sentences from clues in the textbook. Learning can be very good. Imaginative planning for a Year 9 class, made a potentially dull revision session fun. Pupils prepared videos on biology topics, enthusiastically shared ideas, discussed which key ideas and technical words to include, and thus consolidated their knowledge about biological systems and learned revision techniques. Sometimes the key ingredient of successful lessons is the pupils' good attitude to work. From an uninteresting package of information, Year 8 pupils ably identified factors which raise blood pressure. Year 7 pupils eagerly sharpened up their observation skills to successfully classify the characteristics of materials. Using a mix of activities, from the Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education project (CASE) they discussed, and sometimes argued about, ways to simplify classifications.
129. Standards in Year 11 are average overall but achievement and progress from Year 9 are unsatisfactory overall. Pupils do as well as can be expected when teachers pitch work high enough and plan stimulating lessons. Pupils' attention in one of the lowest Year 11 sets was captured by a demonstration of alkali metals reacting with water. Watching unforgettable explosions, they certainly learnt that hydrogen was produced, how reactivity could be measured and how to classify alkali metals. Although pupils learn the fundamental ideas, for example about chemical structures or genetics, they

neither develop nor apply their own ideas often enough. They do not move onto more complex work soon enough.

130. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers have good knowledge of their individual needs and, in a few lessons, they get useful help from support assistants. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress because they receive expert bilingual support. The department develops pupils' numeracy skills well. They practise calculations, apply formulae and often draw graphs accurately, plotting how high a tennis ball bounces on different surfaces in Year 7, or how long alcohol stays in the blood in Year 9. Pupils' scientific vocabulary is strengthened when teachers explain technical language clearly. At the beginning of a lesson on the heart, Year 8 pupils extended their vocabulary by solving anagrams about circulation and finding correct definitions. Pupils do not draw two-dimensional diagrams accurately enough and their written conclusions about experiments are too brief.
131. Analysis of coursework shows that the very highest attainers record investigations very well, with detailed conclusions which describe sophisticated observations. In general though, pupils do not evaluate evidence and experimental procedures, or analyse patterns in results, well enough. Teachers do not discuss methods of investigation in depth when carrying out class experiments. The department still has too few dataloggers, but pupils use computers more than they did during the last inspection. Year 9 used them enthusiastically and successfully to investigate models of series and parallel circuits.
132. Teaching is satisfactory overall, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. It is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. This is reflected in the quality of pupils' learning. The teachers' good subject knowledge is clearly evident. Very good lessons have memorable moments. Year 7 pupils were amazed to see a magnet balancing, seemingly in thin air, above another one. A ruler was passed through the gap without disturbing the balancing magnet. Magic! As they eagerly accomplished this feat they certainly learnt more about magnetic fields. They also knew what they were expected to learn because their teacher explained objectives clearly, so they achieved well. At the same time, they usefully referred to work done in primary school.
133. Pupils learn too slowly when teachers do not check what they already know and so waste time repeating basic information. Work tends to be delivered at the same level for all pupils in a class. Several teachers do not have high enough expectations. Teachers rely too much on the series of textbooks used. They do not use them imaginatively and rarely set work at the higher level questions. As noted in the last inspection report, teachers occasionally hold forth for too long, which limits the time pupils have to explore their own ideas. Teachers do not mark work consistently and seldom guide progress with helpful comments. Pupils take little notice of what is written anyway. When homework is set, it does not strongly emphasise new ideas. Pupils have a superficial knowledge of phenomena when links between theory and practical work are not constantly meshed together.
134. The weaknesses in teaching described above, combined with staffing and syllabus issues, explain pupils' unsatisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. The department is in a state of flux as it emerges from a difficult period. During the last two years sensitive and complex staffing issues have meant that supply teachers have taught a significant number of classes. During this period the head of department failed to provide the necessary drive to raise standards but changes in the department's structure and delegated responsibilities have greatly benefited its management. Evidence seen

during the inspection confirmed the department is moving in the right direction to tackle underachievement. The head of department encourages teachers to share good practice, although classroom observations and scrutiny of work are irregular. The number of lessons for the single and double courses is less than generous. The school has dropped the three separate sciences and introduced new double and single syllabuses in September 2000. Nationally almost nine out of ten pupils take double science, but less than six out of ten will at St Wilfrid's; too many of these are expected to be entered for the foundation level, rather than the higher level.

135. The head of department has established beneficial links with primary schools. These, and the booster classes offered in Year 9, have contributed to the improving standards in Years 7 to 9. The analysis of test and examination results to judge the department's performance has improved since the last inspection. All pupils know their levels and grades and how predicted targets are generated. There is limited tracking of individuals' performance. The accommodation has been refurbished, but funding has not increased much since the last inspection. Technician time is low. The preparation area is cramped and cluttered and storage, particularly of chemicals, is not safe and well organised. Risk assessments have not been carried out for a long time. Pupils hardly ever visit places of scientific interest, neither does the department organise visiting speakers or have a science club; all of these would enrich pupils' experiences.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Much high quality teaching, which is contributing to better standards this year.
- Assessment procedures, which inform staff and pupils of their progress.
- Art visits in Years 10 and 11 which considerably extend pupils' knowledge, and their understanding of art in its diverse forms.

### Areas for improvement

- Missing requirements of the National Curriculum: sketchbooks and opportunities to investigate art, craft and design in the locality.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation: one dilapidated and depressing room. Too little storage.
- Low funding so pupils neither experience nor understand art in all its forms.

136. Year 9 pupils are producing work of an average standard and making satisfactory progress. Work produced in Years 7 to 9 is better than it was during the last inspection because much teaching is now very good. The percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grades A\*-C in 2001 was well below average, although it has gone up slightly over the last three years. All pupils attained A\* to G grades – above average. These results reflect the low levels these pupils reached at the end of Year 9, so they made reasonable progress. Less than 20 pupils took GCSE art in 2001 although over 30 did the year before. Year 10 pupils are making good progress, as they are already producing work of an acceptable standard, which some of them did not at the end of Year 9. Except for a few gifted pupils, Year 11 pupils' work is well below expected standards.
137. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 select and present information well. Having researched Celtic art, they used ICT effectively to present their findings. They use a wide variety of media and materials to explore ideas. Their drawing skills are often good, seen in Year 7's drawing of hands. Their painting skills are satisfactory; Year 8 pupils use earth colours sympathetically to represent aboriginal art. Pupils make three-dimensional artwork

confidently and maintain the correct proportions, for example when they create pop art of enlarged household objects, such as a mobile phone. They do not have sketchbooks, so their critical evaluation skills are unsatisfactory and often poor. Without collecting a wealth of resources, their understanding of research is limited. This hinders their progress.

138. Year 11 pupils' research skills are often limited and lack breadth. Although they have sketchbooks, they are not accustomed to using them, so the annotations they write to explain their ideas are poor. Some pupils have a high level of practical skills, for example using pencil shading effectively to give tone to portraits. Others translate ideas imaginatively. Their representations of zebras in different materials include dramatic effects done with Indian ink. Year 10 pupils use batik and oil pastels, amongst other media, most effectively, merging colours to enhance the enlarged sections of large, Georgia O'Keefe style, flowers. They are developing their imagination and creativity. One pupil experimented with different textures and used wire and bubble wrap to make a face. Pupils' knowledge of artists is limited because the department has only a few books – none with any detail about JS Lowry's work for example – supplemented by others, which teachers bring in. This affects the progress that individual pupils make.
139. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, but only significantly in this school year; it was very good, and very well planned in over 60 per cent of lessons: teachers share with pupils what is to be learned and waste no time moving them on between tasks. In less effective lessons, the teacher did not check that all pupils were clear about what they were doing, so some made too little progress; higher attainers received more advice than others. Very good relationships underpin the good progress being made and pupils listen attentively when they share ideas or receive advice. Showing a pupil how a portrait could be improved, the teacher sensitively emphasised the positive aspects of it before demonstrating how the proportions were incorrect. The pupil listened and learnt. All pupils enjoy art and are frequently absorbed by it. Their interest is shown in their homework. Researching pop artists, some pupils included less well-known artists, such as Segal. Although pupils evaluate their work critically talking to each other or the teacher, they are reluctant, even with encouragement, to voice their views in front of the class.
140. Teachers use natural resources effectively. Painting clouds and skies, a teacher referred to the cloud formation outside and asked pupils to note the changing skies for homework. He also cited the glowering skies seen when there was a chemical fire on the north bank of the Tyne. Such exploration of changes in the natural world gives lessons a spiritual dimension. Teachers' questions and demonstrations are most effective as they make pupils reflect and think about their own work. They extend their horizons, for example, making a pupil appreciate that any material, even sandpaper, can be used to add texture. Another pupil, having been shown how to add colour to provide depth and tone, carried out imaginative experimentation, and later explained that hair may have green in it and face shadows may be blue. Most do experiment confidently. A Year 11 pupil developed a surrealistic theme of parts of the body represented by machines.
141. Year 10 pupils are designing a stained glass window for the Custom House. They visited the National Glass Centre, experienced handling glass, talked to the artist in residence and, on a boat trip, saw the river from a different perspective. They creatively designed lighthouses and cranes on small areas of glass and developed their ideas using other media, such as batik. The visit extended pupils' perception and appreciation of art and fired their imagination. Similar experiences do not happen in Years 7 to 9. The scheme of work is detailed and better than that seen during the last inspection. It

fully covers the National Curriculum but does not refer to involving artists, craftspeople and designers in the locality.

142. Leadership and management are in a state of transition; the about-to-retire head of department is working with the other full-time, newly qualified teacher, who will take over as acting head of department. The latter has already delivered a most successful, Beacon school funded, art course for primary teachers. It included technique practice for batik and stained glass work and was very well received. The third, most competent teacher, teaches other subjects as well. The assessment arrangements introduced since September 2001 are excellent. Individual pupils' standards, progress, strengths, and areas to be improved, are tracked. This is raising standards. Teachers give freely of their time outside lessons, so pupils can work more in the art rooms.
143. Teachers set homework regularly and mark it well, but variety in homework and progress in Years 7 to 9 are hampered without sketchbooks. Talented pupils are well supported. A pupil has been encouraged to join life classes to widen his experience in an area that schools are seldom able to provide. One art room is dilapidated and depressing, with poor storage. It is in desperate need of refurbishment, reflecting the long-term under-funding of the department. Accommodation and resources have not improved since the last inspection. High quality reproductions of artists' and pupils' work are not shown around the school in display cabinets, so the profile and status of this subject is not high enough.

### **Business Studies**

144. GCSE results in 2001, the first year of examination of this subject in the school, were well below average for grades A\*-C. No pupils attained grades A\* or A but all attained grades A\*-G, which was average. The average point score was only a little below average. Overall, pupils did as well in this subject as they did in the other subjects they took. Achievement was therefore satisfactory. The results particularly pleased the school because the pupils concerned had originally followed a GNVQ course in business but switched to GCSE over halfway through because of a change in the teaching staff.
145. Currently, standards and progress in Years 10 and 11 are average overall. Pupils' work, and their responses in class, show that all have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the language and terminology of business and economics, and a good knowledge of business structures. Only a few higher attaining pupils systematically apply this knowledge to solve business problems, so that the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation are not sufficiently well developed. This deficiency reflects the style of teaching and learning, which is satisfactory. Pupils' folders are rigorously well-organised and, topic-by-topic, they build up a detailed body of knowledge by completing worksheets on business theory. In lessons this is reinforced by reviewing the theory at a brisk pace. Opportunities to apply the theory are sometimes missed, though, and the department has few case study resources. Improvements are underway with the arrival of new textbooks, and with plans to teach part of the Year 10 course by pupils running their own mini-enterprise businesses. One unit of coursework, where pupils investigate local business organisations, provides a further opportunity to explore business theory in action.

### **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

Overall the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths
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- Pupils learn to make products of very good quality.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills to inspire pupils by example.
- Teachers work hard to support pupils in completing GCSE coursework, so that a high proportion attain grades A\*-G.
- High quality accommodation with a good overall provision of tools and equipment, especially computers and computer-aided equipment. Pupils use these very well to make products.

#### Areas for improvement

- Design skills which do not develop strongly enough over Years 7 to 9 and constrain the standards achieved in GCSE work.
- The curriculum: the Years 7-9 short modules are too short to develop pupils' design skills or to complete practical work. Too many GCSE pupils do not get the option they want.
- Assessment is not used enough in Years 7-9 to set pupils targets for improvement.
- The current absence of technical support imposes considerable burdens on teachers.
- The low annual capitation allowance leads to shortages of textbooks and some materials.

146. Standards in all years are average overall. Pupils join the school with below expected standards overall. Their experience of design and technology in primary schools differs greatly; many have had few opportunities to develop skills in this subject. Sending teachers to support work in primary schools, through the Beacon school initiative, is therefore laudable. GCSE results in 2001 were below average overall for the percentage of pupils attaining grades of A\*-C and A\*/A. Results at these levels had improved consistently since the last inspection, so that in 2000 they were above average. The predicted fall in 2001 mostly reflected this year group's previous attainment. The school consistently enters practically all pupils for GCSE; the percentage attaining grades A\*-G is above average. This reflects the time and strong support teachers give to help pupils complete their coursework.
147. Results, in terms of A\*-C grades, have been highest in graphics; they were well above average till 2001 when they were close to average. Textiles, systems-and-control and resistant materials results improved strongly up to 2000, when the first two were well above average. All three areas were below average in 2001. Food technology results have been below average for several years. In 1999 and 2000 this reflected the lower overall attainment of the pupils who studied this subject, so that their results were broadly in line with their performance in other subjects; 2001 results indicated underachievement. In the past, the school's GCSE options system resulted in a few unwilling pupils studying food technology, because their first choice option, often graphic products, was oversubscribed. This created some disaffection for the subject.
148. From early in Year 7 pupils begin to measure accurately and to think, through practical experience and experimentation, about ways of varying ingredients or components to improve products. They develop good craft skills and make all kinds of products accurately. They finish them well, using colour especially effectively to make them very attractive. In Year 9 textiles, pupils give their products a professional quality by incorporating computer-aided embroidery; they develop this to very good effect in later GCSE coursework. However, pupils' work across Years 7 to 9 indicates that the depth of their design problem investigations, and their ability to use their findings to come up with design solutions, does not increase significantly over this time. Graphic skills do not develop strongly because the good practice in drawing and annotation, learned in graphics modules, is not readily transferred to other design and technology subjects.



149. Standards seen by the end of Year 11 are also average. Again, weaknesses (which constrain standards, particularly for higher and middle attainers) in terms of pupils' depth of investigation, application of graphic techniques, use of research information and evaluation of solutions, mean that overall standards do not match those attained in making products – which are a strength in all areas. In graphic products these skills are developed more effectively and folder work is mostly good. Given the below expected levels on entry, and mainly average standards at the end of Years 9 and 11, achievement overall is satisfactory, but, in particular for middle and higher attainers, it could be improved with better design skills.
150. The performance of lower attainers in Years 10 and 11 exceeds expectations in many areas, with particularly good examples of well-made products and satisfactory background research in resistant materials. These pupils had thought carefully about the most appropriate materials and processes to make children's play equipment and storage items, and they used computer-aided manufacturing processes well to cut lettering into their work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
151. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching was good or better in nearly 75 per cent of lessons and very good in about 30 per cent. Teachers structure lessons well and provide varied activities to maintain pupils' interest, despite the challenge of two- and sometimes three-hour long sessions. They use new technology and kits very effectively so that pupils learn through practical activities, especially in developing systems and mechanisms. Relationships between teachers and pupils are not universally good; short modules in Years 7 to 9, plus the difficulties arising from having lessons just once a week, means that opportunities to complete work in lessons are limited and requirements for pupils to give up break-times to finish off are seen as onerous by some.
152. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' practical work. Those for design work are not high enough because teachers do not use National Curriculum targets enough to ensure that design standards rise as pupils move from one module to the next. Nevertheless, teachers mark and grade all work thoroughly and assess how much pupils have learned in each module. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills and give engaging, and sometimes inspiring, practical demonstrations. These contribute greatly to the strong development of pupils' practical skills. Spontaneous applause broke out among Year 11 pupils after a teacher's demonstration of confectionery skills – icing celebration cakes. After the teacher's very clear and engaging demonstrations, a Year 8 class very quickly developed skills of rendering perspective drawings to reflect light and shade. Pupils do not, though, have enough opportunities to solve more extended design problems by drawing independently on their acquired skills.
153. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. In recognising key areas for development, leadership is good, and there have been significant improvements in key elements since the last inspection. In particular, the department has moved into new accommodation which now offers very effective and stimulating practical and design areas (although there is too little storage space for materials and project work). The use of computers and computer-aided equipment is now firmly embedded in all the schemes of work with a very good stock of equipment. Teaching and learning styles were criticised in the previous inspection; they have become more varied.
154. There are a few weaknesses in how the subject is managed, and some previous inspection issues have not been remedied. The Years 7 to 9 curriculum is

unsatisfactory as the modules are too short for pupils to develop their design skills adequately; change has been on the department's agenda for some time but effective action to fully remedy the situation has not been taken. Teachers are expert practitioners, but the curriculum is largely designed to suit their specialisms rather than pupils' overall needs; there is too little flexibility in curriculum planning and in the deployment of staff. In Years 7 to 9, teachers do not use assessment appropriately to set targets to improve pupils' design skills. Teaching and learning are not monitored systematically – to encourage good practice to be shared, to identify how pupils can transfer skills between projects and to help reshape the curriculum.

155. Teachers' professional development has been good and very effective in developing CAD/CAM work. The low annual money the department has to spend results in a lack of textbooks and much photocopying, and some restrictions on materials used – there is little work with metal. The lack of a technician continues to impose heavy burdens on teachers in preparing rooms and materials, as it did at the last inspection, but at the time of this inspection the school was close to making an appointment. There is no systematic risk assessment to ensure that safe working practices and environments are maintained.

### **Drama**

156. At present the only drama taught below Year 10 is an introductory course of a few weeks in Year 7. The standard of the work seen was very good and pupils' understanding, about the power of drama to convey ideas and emotion, develops significantly. In the lesson seen pupils explored communication through sound. They learnt how to vary the pitch and frequency of different noises and used these effectively to create a sense of foreboding in their performances. They found the work fun, but demanding, and were engrossed throughout the lesson.
157. The percentage of pupils who attained GCSE grades A\*-C in 2001 was average. Of particular note was the well above average percentage of A\* grades. The standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. This is because of the head of department's very good teaching. Year 11 pupils are very good at improvising and they have well-developed acting techniques. They have the ability to set a play to maximum effect. These pupils had no experience of drama in Years 7 to 9, so their achievement is impressive. Four pupils are working at grade A\* level, a higher proportion than expected.
158. Year 10's work is also well above average and their achievement is very good given their lack of experience. They interpret role and performance and use dialogue convincingly. They vary tone and pitch appropriately to convey feeling. They are not so strong using movement and positioning themselves correctly. They collaborate effectively preparing performances and share ideas about which acting techniques are best suited to a given situation. This was seen to good effect when pupils portrayed the tensions borne of frustration. After playing the scene realistically, they then applied melodrama, by exaggerating gestures and voice tone. By doing so they learnt how speech and posture can be used to maximum effect.
159. The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development by exploring a range of moral and social issues, in lessons and through the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. As well as the major school production there are several other occasions when they perform publicly. The subject also contributes to pupils' confidence in speaking and develops their sensitivity to the way meaning is conveyed through word, gesture and look. The intention is to develop drama for Years

7, 8 and 9 in September 2002 and if the plans are realised then standards will rise because there will be continuity of teaching throughout the school.

160. The recently appointed head of department has had a major impact on how well pupils learn in lessons. This is because he is master of his subject and knows how to inspire and motivate pupils. He has the ability to make the work challenging but fun. His ease of manner and respect for pupils inspires their confidence. He has very good leadership and management skills, a clear vision of how the subject will develop and a realistic appreciation of the difficulties to be overcome. Underpinning all this are sound administrative procedures. He has at his disposal an excellent range of resources, and access to rooms which are suitable for rehearsals and performances.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching overall.
- Teaching of thinking skills encourages pupils to become independent learners.
- Well-designed study guides help pupils' learning.
- Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Absence of fieldwork in Year 9.
- Action planning has imprecise timescales for targets to be achieved.
- The limited opportunities for pupils to practise and develop computer skills.

161. Teachers have assessed end of Year 9 boys' and girls' standards as consistently above average since the last inspection. Except in 2000, girls have outperformed boys, but the gender gap has been much narrower than that seen nationally. GCSE results in 2001 were average with girls narrowly outperforming boys. Year 9 standards and GCSE results have fluctuated but show a general upward trend; the latter have never been below average. Generally pupils perform better in geography than in most of their other subjects. The rising standards since the previous inspection are, in part, because the quality of teaching has improved. They are above average in all years.
162. By the end of Year 9 only a small minority of pupils attains less than above average standards. This represents good progress since they entered the school, when their knowledge and understanding of geography was close to average. Higher attaining pupils have a good grasp of geographical ideas. They have, for example, a thorough understanding of the factors that influence the location of industry and the positive and negative effects on the environment of building new factories. Lower attaining pupils can, for example, describe and compare different characteristics of the tourist industry, but have difficulty in explaining the effects of its expansion on the lives of local people. In general, about a quarter of pupils' progress is held back by their weak writing skills.
163. During the GCSE years most pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment for current Year 11 pupils is rather better than the most recent GCSE results. This is attributable in part to a change of examination syllabus, and also to continued improvement in teaching standards. Higher attaining pupils extract relevant information from a range of sources to make accurate notes. They have a good understanding of the relative importance of different indicators of levels of economic development. Lower attaining pupils can list these indicators, but are unsure how to assess their relevance. In their well presented coursework, pupils set up hypotheses and test them by using simple statistical techniques to analyse their gathered data. Lower attaining pupils draw

accurate graphs to plot their data but have difficulty analysing them. As in Years 7 to 9, lower attaining pupils are taxed by any requirement to write at length. In all years, teachers know the pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language well so they make good progress, which is particularly good on the rare occasions when support staff are present. No marked gender difference in classroom attainment exists in any year group.

164. Overall, teaching is very good. During the inspection, it was never less than good, and 50 per cent was very good or excellent. On average, it is better in Years 10 and 11, where there is no non-specialist teaching. This quality represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection. The small amount of non-specialist teaching in Year 7 is good. The best teaching is characterised by brisk pace, challenge, enthusiasm for the subject and variety of activities. Pupils' response to this very good teaching is overwhelmingly positive. They behave well in lessons, work hard and collaborate well when required.
165. An example of excellent teaching was seen in a Year 8 lesson on hot deserts. Pupils worked quickly extracting relevant information from detailed texts and then produced written accounts of the processes that lead to, and methods of checking the spread of, deserts. In this, and in many other lessons, pupils' learning was assisted by the teachers' emphasis on developing their thinking skills. This aspect of teaching is a notable feature of the department. The orderly atmosphere in classrooms and the guidance given in the use of the excellent study guides, produced by the department, assist pupils' learning further.
166. In most lessons teachers develop pupils' literacy by using such devices as writing frames and emphasising key technical vocabulary. Pupils' numeracy skills are strengthened as they frequently use graphs to plot and analyse data, as seen in climate graphs drawn by Years 8 and 9 pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to use computers, both to improve the appearance of text and graphs and to surf the Internet doing research. Teachers pose questions to all individuals, so pupils are actively involved. All lessons start with a clear statement of aims and a review of recent learning, helping pupils to recall and consolidate what they have learned before. Pupils consider ethical issues in many lessons, for example the effects of tourism in developing countries, or conflicts arising from the forced migration of groups of people.
167. The few teaching weaknesses are relatively minor. In a small number of lessons teachers do not match tasks carefully enough to pupils' capabilities, some lower attainers struggle with lesson content. In others, time is not managed well and, because of the teachers' over-elaborate and lengthy introductions, some pupils cannot complete tasks. Teachers set homework regularly. It valuably reinforces what is covered in class. They mark pupils' work regularly, with helpful comments. End of unit tests are marked with particular thoroughness.
168. The only criticism raised during the last inspection was over the scattered nature of the accommodation and its negative effect on learning. The accommodation is now less spread out and skilful management means that learning is not affected. The subject is well led and managed by a proactive head of department, who provides clear educational direction at the head of a closely knit team. With thorough assessment procedures, pupils' progress is tracked accurately. The development plan sets achievable and realistic targets, but does not set timescales for them. Fieldwork, so important for the development of pupils' social development as well as exposing them to real geography, is not done in Year 9. The department is not resting on its laurels. Schemes of work are undergoing a thorough revision and further opportunities to develop pupils' computer skills are planned.

## HISTORY

Overall the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Above average GCSE results. Pupils achieve well.
- Significant, very good all round improvement since the last inspection.
- High standards of teaching.
- Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- Lessons which include consideration of spiritual, moral and social issues.

### Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory timetabling affects standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Too few resources, particularly textbooks and limited use of ICT.
- Development plans which do not focus on identifying short- to long-term objectives.
- Assessment procedures – not structured in relation to National Curriculum levels and not used to monitor pupils' attainment and progress.
- Too few visits to explore local sites of historical interest.

169. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average but standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, with a significant minority reaching well above average standards. Pupils mostly achieve well and make considerable progress in Years 7 to 9. GCSE results have improved substantially since the previous inspection; they have been consistently above average for four years. In 2001 the percentages of pupils attaining grades A\*-C, 65 per cent, and A\*-G were above average. The percentage of A\*/A grades was lower than in 2000, reflecting that year group's overall lower attainment in Year 7. More boys than girls take history but their results are not as good. The numbers entered in 2001 were lower than in 2000.
170. Early on in Year 7, pupils are very well trained about how to analyse evidence, an important element of the GCSE examination. In Year 7 teachers use a very effective example – trying to establish who started a fight in the playground. Pupils question witnesses, to determine their credibility, learning how and why evidence may be biased, and thus understand the whole concept of the reliability of evidence. A minority of pupils underachieve and attain below average standards. This arises out of unsatisfactory timetabling, when a group's two lessons a week are taught by different teachers, and when non-history specialists occasionally teach both those lessons. During the inspection, lack of communication between teachers sharing a class resulted in the only lesson when teaching was unsatisfactory, as material was repeated.
171. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average, with again a substantial minority attaining well above. Overall achievement is good. One of the reasons for the high standards is pupils' skilful evaluation of evidence and how they relate it to additional, contextual knowledge. In a Year 10 lesson on Chamberlain's appeasement policy, pupils related documentary evidence to contemporary thinking and the motives of the major participants, who had ignored the views of people who would be affected by the outcome. Higher attaining pupils linked the latter's feelings to current events, and appreciated how a sense of frustration and impotence can lead to acts of violence. Year 11 pupils, studying the Weimar Republic, considered how circumstances might influence a young man, who had survived the Great War trench horrors, to become a Nazi Party supporter. In both lessons teachers explained and led discussion on the

spiritual elements very well. Pupils gained some valuable insight into human response and motivation.

172. The improvement in standards has happened because pupils are now taught very well. In nearly 50 per cent of the lessons observed, teaching was very good or excellent, which represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers manage their classes extremely well and pupils arrive at lessons ready to work. An outstanding feature is the excellent relationships. Teachers know individual pupils well and they generate confidence and a level of mutual commitment that encourage them, especially the girls, to be positive and co-operative. Specialist teachers use their very high level of subject knowledge and enthusiasm to make learning enjoyable. They structure lessons very well to take account of the different groups' levels of attainment.
173. In a Year 7 lesson, having discussed evidence to decide whether William II had been murdered or not, one member of each group presented its findings to the rest of the class. Nominated pupils assessed how each group performed. Similar group presentations and evaluation happened in another Year 9 lesson, on the dropping of the first atomic bomb. This style of learning develops pupils' self-confidence very well. It also gives teachers more time to help pupils with special educational needs or language difficulties. These pupils usually learn well, partly because of this extra support and because teachers select text with language they can understand.
174. Teachers use a variety of methods to make learning stimulating. To help pupils learn about the Industrial Revolution a teacher has devised a simulation exercise, based on a soccer computer game, in which groups of Year 8 pupils become mill owners. As the teacher describes historical events, and alters the factors involved, so pupils take decisions and work out their profits, losses, or potential bankruptcy! Through the game, pupils learn about inventions that dramatically altered the textile industry and about the economic and social changes that followed them. Some of the decisions pupils make, in addition to economic ones, involve moral and social considerations, for example on dismissing workers. In such challenging lessons, pupils listen well, concentrate hard, discuss decisions animatedly and learn very well.
175. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' learning is extended by project work. Using the Internet, CD-Rom resources and video extracts, pupils' projects include the Romans (Year 7) and life in the trenches during the First World War (Year 9). Many pupils wordprocess their text competently and successfully add colour and imported images. Generally though, ICT is not used enough. In addition to learning independently, these assignments nurture pupils' skills to analyse evidence. A considerable spiritual dimension permeates the Year 9 assignment. Pupils use extracts from the film *All Quiet on the Western Front* to explore, from a German viewpoint, the main character's feelings and reactions. This type of learning, which pupils clearly enjoy, is limited because the history department is very poorly resourced. It has too few textbooks, reference books and audio-visual resources. Although literacy is a problem for a significant number of pupils, particularly for many who have special educational needs, the history department supports the school's literacy initiative very positively. Pupils have access to dictionaries in class and see lists of subject-specific words. Other displays celebrate pupils' successes and support topics being studied.
176. Leadership and management are satisfactory but teaching is not monitored and evaluated regularly. Assessment procedures are effective but not linked to National Curriculum levels. Teachers do not use them to analyse pupils' attainment and progress, or plan future work. Despite the proximity of many significant historical sites pupils rarely visit any of them. The head of department has produced a concise and

informative handbook. The development plan is a clear, functional document, but it does not focus enough on the long-term forward thinking of the department.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **very good**.

### Strengths:

- Very good GCSE teaching with very clear lesson plans.
- Pupils' very good working habits and understanding.
- Very good department management supporting a high level of cross-curricular use.
- High standards of GCSE coursework.

### Areas for improvement:

- Arrangements to ensure progress in all years – assessment of standards on entry and greater co-operation between departments to build on skills already acquired.
- ICT teaching in some subjects, especially how pupils should use the Internet.

177. By the end of Year 9 ICT standards are average, both in the teacher assessments and in the work seen during the inspection. Standards last year were lower because pupils had limited experience of control technology, so that no pupil attained Level 7, but this has now been remedied. GCSE pupils perform well in relation to the other subjects they take for GCSE. The percentage of pupils attaining A\*-C grades was very close to average in 2001, while in 2000 it was well above average. Boys perform slightly better than girls, and consistently more boys than girls take this GCSE option.
178. By Year 9 pupils are technically competent. All strands of the National Curriculum are delivered effectively through subjects, rather than in discrete ICT lessons. Because they enter the school with generally lower than average ICT skills, pupils therefore achieve well. However, pupils depend heavily on detailed instructions about how they should apply their skills, rather than making their own decisions about when and how to use them. They have a strong repertoire – desktop publishing, wordprocessing or multimedia – for presenting information, but they tend to cut and paste information directly from CD-Roms or the Internet, without altering it to make it relevant to what they are doing. They model situations using spreadsheets competently, but are too strongly directed by teachers. The amount of thinking pupils do when they use ICT depends considerably on which subject they use it in.
179. GCSE pupils produce very high quality coursework. They annotate drafts clearly, showing good understanding of different audiences' needs. They can analyse problems to find computer-aided solutions and link spreadsheets, database and communication software. All pupils understand the basic purpose of different activities and higher attainers explain clearly the rationale for all their decisions. These pupils make very good progress in Years 10 and 11 and achieve very well. They, and others not taking GCSE, use ICT in all of their other subjects, so almost all pupils are competent ICT users, especially in design and technology. This department's recently installed computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment is having a major beneficial impact – high quality computer-assisted embroidery in textiles and competent computer-assisted milling.
180. In almost all subjects pupils use the Internet extensively for research, but again they tend to copy material rather than select and adapt it. The relevance and significance of information does not have as high a status as presentation. A fine example of ICT being used well is when Year 8 pupils write an introduction to the school to welcome future Year 7 pupils. The task has a clear purpose, nothing can be downloaded from the

Internet, pupils work independently and have to consider their audience carefully, and what is appropriate. Pupils successfully design the wording, appearance and decoration of their leaflets.

181. The high standard of GCSE work seen is the direct result of very good teaching. During the inspection it was good in over 90 per cent of lessons, including 60 per cent when it was very good. ICT specialists deliver the most effective teaching, especially in GCSE classes and where they support ICT in other subjects. GCSE teaching is very good because teachers adopt systematic approaches to make sure that pupils think carefully about what they are doing. Very high quality annotated drafts show the consideration pupils give to the content, accuracy and presentation of their coursework.
182. The usually good ICT teaching varies in Years 7 to 9, and in non-GCSE ICT in Years 10 and 11, depending on the subject and what pupils are doing. In English, teachers help pupils to understand the requirements of their audience as they design pamphlets or PowerPoint presentations, thus meeting the needs of both subjects. When ICT teachers work alongside subject staff, they make sure that the ICT curriculum is emphasised enough. In mathematics, ICT standards have gone up and this year pupils are challenged in modelling and control. As a result, Year 8 control tasks are at a higher level than those in Year 9.
183. Teaching ICT through subjects is successful because the department is alert to the problems that can arise if non-specialists focus too much on their subject rather than ICT. This does not happen often. Most teachers have received training and guidance so they know how to improve pupils' performance, both in their subject and in ICT. This approach to ICT is also successful because pupils become aware of its applications and relevance. They enjoy using it and state that it helps them to learn. Many use the computer rooms outside school hours, to access the Internet, and use wordprocessing and desktop publishing.
184. The ICT department monitors coverage of the National Curriculum well, by written feedback from teachers and scrutiny of pupils' work. As ICT specialist staff do not teach Year 7 pupils, it is difficult for them to assess attainment on entry, hence measuring progress is difficult. Some areas of the ICT curriculum are less attractive to non-specialists, and are therefore under-represented in the balance of pupils' ICT work. For example, Year 8 pupils are given almost identical desktop publishing tasks in English, history and religious education and too little data-handling work.
185. Other, less important barriers to learning include the lack of datalogging, because the school only has enough equipment for demonstration purposes. On the whole the range of cross-curricular experiences is so wide that pupils make good progress, with good levels of achievement. Subject teachers rarely set ICT homework and so the only homework is in GCSE ICT, where it is relevant and helps learning. They also rarely give pupils comments on their ICT performance, whereas one of the strengths of GCSE is the high quality of feedback and discussion with pupils. As a result of this, only GCSE pupils know clearly how good their work is and what they need to do next.
186. Pupils appreciate how much the ICT teachers are committed to their learning. The department, including the technician, make equipment and advice available before and after school so that pupils who do not have home computers are not disadvantaged. Teachers give very good support to pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. ICT teachers and the learning support mentors co-operate well. They identify pupils with ICT talents and give them extra challenge. Leadership and management are very good.



187. Lack of equipment in the past hindered learning, but this has improved since the last inspection. The number of computers is just below average, but they, and a wide range of other equipment, are modern and now reliably maintained by a very efficient full-time technician. Further expansion is making it possible to plan for most pupils to take GCSE next year, and for a Year 7 discrete lesson. The school is therefore aware of areas of potential weakness in pupils' learning, and is addressing them. In all respects the department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French and German

Overall the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Procedures introduced in this school year to assess pupils' work.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and relationship with each other and teachers.

#### Areas for improvement

- The lack of direction in planning and leadership in recent years.
- The failure to put spoken French and German at the centre of teaching and learning.

188. Standards in French are below average in all years and pupils make too little progress. In French, particularly, there has been a consistent decline since the last inspection. Pupils' spoken French is well below average and much of the writing they do is merely copying. However, they do often listen to French and read it successfully. According to teacher assessments, Year 9 French standards improved over the last three years and the number of pupils attaining Level 5 increased dramatically, to above average in 2001. These standards are not reflected in the work seen during the inspection. The acting head of department (appointed just before the inspection) has introduced much better, and realistic, assessment procedures. Attainment in German, studied by only top set pupils, is low because pupils only start the language in Year 9 and have only one hour's teaching each week. However they make fast progress and their achievement is high.
189. At GCSE, French standards are now well below, and in German they are below, pupils' performance in their other subjects. The percentages of pupils attaining GCSE French in 2001 were below average at both A\*-C and A\*-G. There has been no A\*-C improvement since the last inspection and not all pupils attained A\*-G in 2001, which they have done consistently in the past. GCSE German results in 2001 were well above average at both A\*-C and A\*-G. Attainment at the higher grades has been very inconsistent in recent years, alternating between below average to well above. This presumably reflects the variable quality of teaching of the two principle German specialists, but this could not be confirmed during the inspection. Less than 30 pupils take this language each year.

190. Present standards in Years 10 and 11 are well below average in French. Although a small number of top set pupils listen, read and write at an average level, their spoken French is unsatisfactory because much work they do is only reading aloud – they rarely practise spontaneous conversation. Attainment in German is average in all four skills. Pupils' achievement, set against prior attainment, is below expectations in both languages.
191. Poor speaking in all years is the result of the teaching style. The department has no policy or direction on teaching and learning. Teachers are left to work individually and often rely too heavily on the textbook. The focus of learning then becomes the written word and pupils are not encouraged to use French for genuine communication. Teachers often speak French well at the beginning of lessons and set the right atmosphere, but they lose this when they explain grammatical points, or what has to be done, in English. They expect pupils to translate into English to show their understanding. This is not good practice. The adverse impact of this style of learning is obvious, because pupils hesitate for a long time before they reply to questions.
192. In an unsatisfactory Year 9 lesson, conducted mainly in English, pupils worked on building up past tenses, word by word. They translated sentences from English. Pupils did not speak; they read aloud. Many made mistakes because they did not understand the complex structures. In contrast, in a very good Year 9 German lesson, pupils made progress in understanding some quite challenging grammar. The teacher used pictures and actions to make meanings clear. In this case, the learning was entirely in German; there were no lengthy explanations, but many opportunities to practise the language.
193. Teaching is well planned, except that support and stimulating materials for high attainers is not included. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and most provide them with a variety of activities, for the whole class or in groups and pairs. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory in all years but with significant weaknesses in speaking. It fails to reach the standards seen during the last inspection, when it was often good. In most lessons pupils revise material already learnt, acquire new knowledge and have the opportunity to practise all four language skills. They work effectively together but few of them speak enough French or German.
194. In a Year 11 German lesson with several strengths, pupils were asked to work in groups on an interesting role-play exercise. The teacher spoke in German for much of the lesson, but also explained too much in English. Too many pupils followed this example and built their work around English thinking. Two groups, for example, interpreted the role-play as a writing exercise, which they then read aloud.
195. Gifted linguists make unsatisfactory progress because there is only one level of challenge in lessons. Materials to support or extend these particular pupils are not available. The progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is good, as they are able to apply their language-learning skills to French or German. A significant number of pupils have an unsatisfactory attitude to learning a language because of the inappropriate teaching style in several lessons, which does not capture their interest.
196. Curriculum breadth and balance is unsatisfactory. Introducing German in Year 9, with too little teaching time and only for the top band, seriously restricts pupils' choice for GCSE. This is the major reason why so few pupils study German in Years 10 and 11. No pupils have chosen to study two modern foreign languages for GCSE. Pupils have too little experience of French and German cultures. There is no native speaker of either language on the staff and visits and exchanges to France and Germany, so strong in years past, have been discontinued. Teachers do not use authentic French

and German materials enough, neither in teaching nor in displays to create the right atmosphere. Pupils do not read real foreign magazines or see French and German television programmes, both of which would increase their appreciation of different cultures. They see modern foreign language learning as an activity which is carried out largely in English.

197. Resources are unsatisfactory. Not all rooms have an overhead projector, which restricts teaching styles and prevents teachers from using pictures or similar materials to encourage speaking and understanding. The unsatisfactory accommodation consists of mobile classrooms. Teachers do not work as a team or share resources. Staffing is also unsatisfactory. The long-term absences of the head of department have been covered by members of the department and supply teachers, teaching outside their specialism. This is far from ideal. There are no foreign language assistants. Only the acting head of department has no other whole school responsibilities. The deputy head and two heads of year do not have the time to focus on developing the department's work.
198. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. The development plan does not adequately address ways to raise standards. It concentrates on resources, when teaching and learning strategies are urgently needed. The plan has been in place for almost a year and there has been no progress with many key points. Progress since the last inspection has been non-existent. The recently appointed acting head of department has revised the previously inadequate assessment procedures and introduced record sheets for individual pupils. She has also bid successfully for additional books and established a video conferencing session. She has had too little support to carry out this challenging role fully. Consequently important priorities, such as monitoring of teaching and learning, especially needed to share good practice, are not happening.

## MUSIC

Overall the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- High standard of performance in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and provides a good example for pupils.
- Music makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The link between assessment and planning.

199. In 2001 teachers assessed that the number of pupils reaching the expected level by the end of Year 9 was broadly average. Present standards are the same. Pupils' experience of music before they come to St Wilfrid's is mainly in singing and listening. They make reasonable progress. All cope with the work set but the more musically gifted are not sufficiently stretched to reach higher levels and achieve more. In Year 7 teachers insist on high standards of singing and accuracy in pitching, so almost all pupils sing in tune. Most know the elements of music and can explain, often with vocal illustrations, high and low, loud and quiet and that timbre is about the quality of sound. These skills are further strengthened by their ability to recognise the sound of different instruments in recorded music, especially commendable when Year 8 recognised the sackbut as the predecessor of the trombone. Many pupils sing in the choir and play in ensembles, which appreciably improves their sight-reading.

200. The few pupils who choose to study GCSE music have almost all gained at least grade C in recent years. Compared with their other subjects and with what they were expected to achieve, this represents reasonable achievement. In Year 11 lessons pupils clearly make the most of their experience as performers, to help them understand the characteristics of music in historical context and style. They easily recognise musical features, such as fugal or canonic entries in counterpoint, because they have firsthand experience through singing in the choir. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 use computers very competently to compose. The same musical features are evident in their own compositions, which shows they have a well-rounded understanding of music. Present standards are above average.
201. Pupils enjoy music and, because the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, they readily apply themselves, behave very well, and very willingly follow instructions. However, they are given very few opportunities to determine how they will work, and so in lessons they rarely show any initiative about how they will learn. About 80 pupils learn a musical instrument in school and several more have private lessons. During the inspection many were taking instrument examinations. They used every available minute to rehearse and test each other's aural skills – such is their desire to do well. There are plenty of opportunities for music-making and developing talent. The department's showcase is its annual cabaret which spawns many ensembles and gives a platform to a variety of musical talent. There are regular rehearsals of choirs, one being the high spot of the inspection, a brass band, a Ceilidh Band – The Sanddancers – and a rock band. In all these, pupils learn the discipline and protocol of working and performing together. In view of their obvious joy in making music, it is disappointing that more pupils do not choose music for GCSE.
202. Teaching is good throughout the school with touches of excellence. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development as the teachers' approach values all pupils' contributions and raises their self-esteem. Pupils see very good examples to follow as the teachers are expert musicians. This is particularly evident when they teach singing and nurture its value in training musicians' aural awareness. Pupils are given a rich variety of music to pursue and their enjoyment stems from the teachers' ability to turn their hands to most types of music. Pupils and teachers get on very well together and this helps to break down barriers and inhibitions, particularly in singing. When trying to explain a musical point pupils follow the teacher's example and readily use their voices when words are not enough. Teachers pay close attention to developing the vocabulary of musical terms and to exploring the meanings of words.
203. Although lessons are enjoyable and pupils learn well by experiencing much music, teachers pay too little attention to checking their progress. Teachers do not use day-to-day assessment enough to drive up standards and to raise the status and intellectual rigour of the subject. Teachers use a commercial course well and with discrimination, so work is pitched at the right level for most. Occasionally however, pupils, especially the more musically competent, could cope with more stringent demands. The balance between teaching the whole class together and allowing time for exploration in groups favours the teacher-led approach; as a result pupils do not work independently enough. Furthermore, as teachers rarely set homework, they do not encourage pupils to be more inquisitive and to pursue their personal interests.
204. Leadership is inspirational, which accounts for the energy and enthusiasm which pervade the ethos of the department. However long-term management is wanting in one or two crucial areas and progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Without a comprehensive policy, end of Year 9 assessments are unreliable. Although assessment was satisfactory at the last inspection, the department

has not moved with the times to take advantage of the richness of information which is available to track pupils through their school career. This is associated with a need to examine the scheme of work in the light of the changes since September 2000, and to link teaching aims to assessment opportunities. The outcome of not having a reliable assessment system is that pupils are not achieving as much as they could. At the moment the accommodation is poor and resources are barely adequate. However, many of these shortcomings may be rectified when the department has access to new multimedia facilities in the City Learning Centre. The head of department has not considered the implications of this move in enough depth to fully exploit the opportunities presented by this exciting enterprise.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good leadership and management.
- Very good teaching and learning; teachers are knowledgeable specialists with high expectations in standards of dress, behaviour and attitudes to work.
- Pupils benefit from the wide range of activities in lessons and the very good extra-curricular provision – participation is high.
- The significant contribution the department makes to pupils' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE standards.
- The balance of activities in Years 7 to 9 and the lack of vocational qualifications in Years 10 and 11.
- The limited use of ICT.
- Full risk assessment.

205. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with the standard expected nationally, with a number of pupils attaining above this. Teachers' assessments of standards in 2001 were very similar. By the end of Year 11 in the core physical education programme, pupils' attainment is also average with a number of pupils above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when a significant minority of pupils underachieved. GCSE physical education was taken for the first time in 2001. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C was well below average. However, all pupils achieved grades A\*-G. Present standards are better and closer to average. Teachers have attended courses to strengthen their understanding of the syllabus and to fine tune their skills of assessing standards of performing and written work.
206. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry and make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the physical education programme and make good progress. Those with particular talents are encouraged and, where necessary, financially supported, to receive extra coaching and to attend events. Ten pupils, for example, play tennis at a local club. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of skills and techniques in games, athletics and trampolining. In games, pupils perform sending and receiving skills with increasing control and accuracy, and apply them well when they take part in games. For example, in a Year 9 basketball lesson, the boys had a good understanding of the rules of the game and were able to perform and talk about defensive formations in competitive play.
207. In athletics, in the triple jump, pupils linked together hop, step and jump actions, with increasing confidence and improving performance. Trampolining is a strength in the

school. In a Year 9 lesson girls linked a range of moves into a routine with increasing fluency, control and co-ordination. A number of high attainers performed more challenging and difficult routines and included somersaults. By the end of Year 11, pupils increase their knowledge, skills and techniques in a range of activities including badminton, trampolining, table tennis, health and fitness and rock climbing. In both badminton and table tennis pupils demonstrated a range of skills in both single and doubles play, with a number of high achieving pupils anticipating moves in order to outwit their opponents.

208. The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good. All teachers are knowledgeable, experienced specialists and they teach a range of activities most competently and confidently. Pupils respond well to the high expectations demanded of them and they are both keen and positive in lessons. They are highly motivated by the good role models their teachers present – a valuable combination of enthusiasm and professionalism. Teachers organise practical activities very well and manage pupils thoughtfully, with the result that participation levels are high.
209. Pupils use equipment with due care and attention and are fully aware of the importance of safety. Excellent attention is given to this in trampolining. Teachers plan lessons very carefully and use questions well to improve pupils' understanding and use of physical education language – thus literacy skills are developed. Assessment procedures are very good and teachers have a clear understanding of the progress pupils make. Teachers develop and foster very good relationships and interaction with, and between pupils. Pupils therefore develop very good social and co-operative skills and in competitive team play they demonstrate fair play and good sporting behaviour. The department's contribution to pupils' social and moral development is significant.
210. Leadership and management are very good. The department works well together as a team. Teachers give generously of their time and make a significant contribution to building pupils' confidence, self-esteem, and positive attitudes to being physically active. Long-term planning and schemes of work are underdeveloped. The dual use of some facilities, for example one hall is used for lunch and then lessons, challenges the department in how they plan and organise different activities. Currently there is no designated room for the teaching of GCSE physical education and so display material cannot be used. The department has no digital camera nor video camera, so pupils cannot analyse body movement. Risk assessment within the department is not carried out fully.
211. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities. Boys and girls are taught separately, which works well. Girls appreciate the changes made to the activities they do, and their kit; so now most join in lessons and all look smart. However, the time pupils spend on different activities in Years 7 to 9 is not well balanced, for example, boys spend twice the amount of time on gymnastics as girls. No dance is taught in any of the years. No vocational qualifications are offered in Years 10 and 11, either as an alternative to GCSE or as certification of particular skills. ICT is not used enough, particularly in the GCSE course. Since the last inspection the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been reviewed and improved, standards have gone up and GCSE has been introduced. Teaching and learning have also improved significantly.
212. The provision for, and pupils' participation in, extra-curricular and sporting activities are very good. On two mornings a week, long before school starts, girls practise trampolining and they enjoy hockey and rounders at lunchtime. Funded by Sport England, the head of mathematics organises rugby league trails and other members of staff also support sporting activities. Pupils have a range of opportunities to represent

the school in competitive sport and a number of talented pupils have been selected to play regionally and nationally.