

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. DAMIAN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Ashton Under Lyne

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106270

Headteacher: Mr P Jackson

Reporting inspector: Ted Wheatley

10013

Dates of inspection: 10 - 13 December 2001

Inspection number: 243114

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lees Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: The Reverend D. Heakin

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10013	Ted Wheatley	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Equal opportunities; English as an additional language.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils or students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13762	Norman Shelley	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2893	John Manning	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Drama.	
12885	John Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	
21866	Dave Tracey	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.	
31129	Jeff Pickering	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design.	
7084	Jack Haslam	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.	
12118	Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography.	
19152	Richard Merryfield	<i>Team inspector</i>	History.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
22906	Barry Hodgson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.	Community links.
37393	John Ratcliffe	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.	
1340	David Wigley	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music.	
7926	James Bowden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education; Special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Damian's Roman Catholic High School has 756 pupils aged 11 to 16 and is smaller than most comprehensive schools, although numbers have increased since the last inspection. Ninety five per cent of pupils come from Catholic families. Overall there are more boys than girls in the school. One pupil has English as an additional language, the first language being French. Pupils at the school are from predominantly white English backgrounds; other ethnic groups amount to only one percent. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportions of pupils who are on the school's register of special needs and who have statements of special educational need are both below average. Some pupils have been disapplied from taking the full range of National Curriculum subjects and instead take a programme of work-related courses. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly average. The school has Investors in People status, has received the 'Schools Curriculum Award', and has been identified by the local authority as a school where there is exemplary practice.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school providing a good standard of education. The leadership and plans for improvement are very good, and the school maintains a strong Catholic ethos that has a positive effect on the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. The school's strong links with the community and its inclusion policy have a beneficial effect on the curriculum. Teaching is good and has improved. The school gives good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils' attitudes in lessons and around school are very good.
- Teaching is good and a significant amount is very good.
- The school is very well managed, and the leadership of the headteacher and key staff gives very clear direction for how the school should develop.
- The school monitors and evaluates teaching and plans improvements effectively.
- Links with the community are very good, and those with the colleges for developing the vocational curriculum are excellent.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is very good, and plays a significant part in pupils' personal development.
- Governors are involved effectively in planning the development of the school.
- Parents have great confidence in the work of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The accommodation of the school, especially for ICT.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in January 1997 the school has made good improvements. Standards achieved by boys have improved, and the school has developed methods to monitor performance. The progress of the highest attaining pupils has improved, particularly in science, as a result of more challenging work and higher demands made on pupils. Standards in ICT, however, have not improved sufficiently and National Curriculum requirements for the subject are not fully met. The provision for pupils in Year 8 has improved. The quality of assessment, reporting and target setting has been maintained and is used thoroughly throughout the school. Standards have risen and teaching has improved, with no unsatisfactory teaching seen at this inspection. The capacity to improve further is good.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
GCSE examinations	B	C	C	C	

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are broadly average and have risen in recent years. In the end of Year 9 national tests taken in 2001, results were above the national average, and broadly average compared with similar schools. Standards were above average in mathematics and had improved on the previous year. Overall standards have been maintained in recent years. Inspection evidence shows standards as average overall, and above average in English, mathematics and science as a result of improved teaching. They are below average in ICT. Overall, pupils achieve well over Years 7 to 9, with the exception of ICT where achievement over time is unsatisfactory.

In the GCSE examinations in 2001, standards were average. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grade GCSEs was average. The percentage obtaining five or more A*-G grades was close to the national average in 2001, though over recent years it has been above average. The percentage obtaining one or more A*-G grades was broadly average. In general, the school did not achieve its targets, which were a little high taking into account previous attainment. In all subjects, standards are broadly as expected. Results in French are below average overall, but this is because the great majority of pupils are entered for the examination, which is unusual. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is good overall, although unsatisfactory in ICT when all pupils are taken into account because pupils do not receive their full entitlement in the subject.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school and receive a high quality of support. The school is careful to identify any pupils having difficulties in learning for any reason, and makes a sustained effort to seek out specialist help or provide its own support. It does this successfully and these identified pupils make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good. They respect teachers, take pleasure in coming to school and move around, in often confined space, with consideration for the buildings and resources.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in lessons, assemblies, organised activities and around the buildings.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good both between pupils and between pupils and teachers. Pupils develop a high level of maturity and treat each other with respect and consideration.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good overall. About one fifth is very good, over half is good and the rest is satisfactory. No teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. It is very good in music, satisfactory in modern foreign languages and ICT, and good in other subjects. The significant strength in teaching is teachers' subject knowledge, which is generally very good and makes a real contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods and establish good discipline and working relationships. In the majority of subjects, marking is effective and used well to inform pupils of what they need to do to improve; this helps pupils make good progress. In ICT, there is no consistent day-to-day marking to inform and guide pupils. Homework is used well to reinforce work done in school and to give opportunities for pupils to engage in their own research. The generally high quality of teaching results in good learning, with pupils acquiring a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding. The exception to this is in ICT, where there are insufficient opportunities to develop skills. The teaching of literacy skills is broadly satisfactory and of numeracy skills it is good.

The school meets the needs of all pupils well. The needs of the highest attainers, those with special educational needs and those who have other difficulties are well met. Teachers identify needs and specialist staff work effectively to ensure that pupils are not excluded or disadvantaged in any way.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good and the needs of all pupils are fully addressed. It meets the needs of the highest attainers, and there is very good provision for those for whom an academic curriculum is not suitable. However, time for careers work is limited and the time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 prevents the subject being taught to the depth required. Provision for ICT is inadequate to meet statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for special educational needs is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11, where the curriculum is planned carefully to meet needs. The quality of support is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision is very good. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory; western European culture is well catered for in the curriculum, but there is limited attention to other cultural traditions from around the world.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school shows a high level of care for its pupils. Procedures to promote acceptable behaviour are very good. The assessment of attainment and progress is good, and sound use is made of the information to plan the curriculum and to guide pupils in improving their performance.

Parents' views of the school are very positive. They have great confidence in the education provided and feel very secure in the level of support provided for their sons and daughters.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff is very good and provides a clear direction to the school in planning improvements. Staff are generally deployed effectively, and the support they provide for the work of the school and its improvement is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and give a high level of support to the school in its development planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has effective procedures to evaluate its own performance, to observe teaching and plan improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of available resources. Financial planning is effective, the school identifies and makes good use of several sources of funding, and ensures that it achieves the best value for what it spends.

Staffing and resources are generally satisfactory and the accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient accommodation for ICT in particular and for some other subjects. Some corridors are very narrow, and the doors that open into them create a hazard.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like school.• Children are taught well and make good progress.• The amount of homework is right for pupils' needs.• Pupils behave well.• The school has high expectations of how well pupils do and their behaviour.• The school responds well to parents' concerns.• The school works closely with parents.• The school is well managed.• The school helps children to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small proportion of parents consider that they are not well enough informed about how well their children are doing in school.• Some parents think that the range of activities provided out of lessons is not good enough.

The inspection team agrees with the strengths identified by parents. Inspectors judged the quality of reports to parents to be good, and that they keep parents well informed about pupils' progress. The school offers a wide range of activities out of lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards of attainment on entry to the school fluctuate from year to year. They have risen in recent years but were broadly average in 2001. The year group of pupils who took end of Year 9 national tests in 2001 was average overall when they entered the school in 1998, but the proportion of higher attainers was low.
2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2001, when pupils were 14, their performance was above average overall, and average when compared with the standards obtained by pupils in similar schools. In English and science, standards were average compared with national standards and those of pupils in similar schools. Standards were above the national average in mathematics and above average compared with similar schools. Standards have been maintained over several years. The difference between the results of boys and girls was smaller than the difference seen nationally, and has reduced since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils obtaining the higher level (Level 6) or better in the national tests was above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Compared with similar schools, attainment at the higher levels was above average in English, well above average in mathematics and average in science.
3. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards are average overall in Years 7 to 9, and above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Standards are rising in these subjects because there is a focus on improving teaching and thus the challenge and suitability of work for all pupils. Standards are above average in history and music, but below average in ICT. They are broadly average elsewhere.
4. Overall, pupils achieve well from Year 7 to Year 9, taking into account their attainment on entry to the school. The school's introduction of the National Literacy Strategy is starting to have a positive impact on standards achieved in lessons, as are the school's methods of teaching numeracy skills in most subjects. Progress is good in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects; it is satisfactory in art and modern foreign languages, but unsatisfactory in ICT.
5. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001, the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A*-C grades was broadly average. This was slightly lower than in 1999 but in keeping with these pupils' levels of attainment in the end of Year 9 tests taken in 1999. This has been the same pattern over recent years. The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A*-G grades was average, which was a drop from the above average percentage over recent years. The percentage of pupils obtaining one or more A*-G grade at GCSE was average. Results overall were in line with those obtained by pupils in similar schools. The school did not achieve its targets, but the targets were set a little high considering the previous levels of attainment of the pupils concerned. Results in science were above average, due largely to a great deal of development work in teaching. They were below average in French, but this is a reflection of the policy to enter most pupils for the examination, an approach not generally adopted by schools. In other subjects, standards were broadly as expected.
6. The attainment of pupils presently in Years 10 and 11, based on inspection evidence, is average overall and in line with predictions based on a wide range of assessment information. Standards in English and mathematics are average, but they are above

average in science. In art, history, music and physical education, standards are above average and in design and technology and geography they are broadly average. In ICT standards are below average overall although the attainment of pupils following examination courses is in line with the national average.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school and receive a high quality of support. The school is careful to identify any pupils having difficulties in learning for any reason, and makes a sustained effort to seek out specialist help or provide its own support. It does this successfully and these identified pupils make good progress.

8. Across Years 10 and 11, achievement is generally good. Pupils make good progress in English and science, and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Higher attaining pupils following the science GCSE course make very good progress, and are completing the normally two-year course in one year. Progress is good in most other subjects. It is satisfactory in design and technology, where limited accommodation puts some restrictions on the pace of progress that pupils make. Those pupils following a GCSE course in ICT make sound progress but others, the majority of pupils, make unsatisfactory progress.

9. Some pupils follow vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Their achievements are good and their success rate is above the regional average. All of these pupils achieved a vocational qualification in 2001 and the majority has gone on to further studies. They make good progress in their school and college work, and attendance at college is above the national average. Pupils say they enjoy the adult freedoms offered by the college, and quickly lose their fear of going to a strange institution. All gain accreditation for NVQ courses, though not all gain a full certificate. When they leave school, 70 per cent of these pupils progress to courses in the college, and the rest find modern apprenticeships.

10. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall. Pupils achieve well where teachers emphasise the importance of literacy skills, such as in science, design and technology, history and music. In science and history, there are opportunities for pupils to read aloud in class, and they use this time profitably. Research work in music involves pupils in looking up information on the Internet. In design and technology, many pupils produce careful design briefs that show good command of vocabulary and key technical terms. Most classrooms in the school have effective displays of key words relating to the subject that takes place there. Occasionally, as in an English poetry lesson for pupils with special educational needs, the vivid display of the slogans and propaganda used in World War II give extra help to the class. Pupils have opportunities to develop their ideas orally in assemblies, and they are encouraged to take care in spelling in most subjects. However, the focus on literacy is not as sharp as it should be in all subjects.

11. Standards in numeracy are rising and are above expected levels for the majority of pupils. Compared with the previous inspection, pupils now enter the school with better confidence in the use of number. These are further developed as part of the mathematics curriculum, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Mathematics classes frequently begin with activities requiring pupils to undertake mental arithmetic exercises. These lessons make use of a range of resources, including target boards, individual white boards and number fans. Overall the teaching of numeracy is effective. A good range of approaches is used and some aspects are enjoyed by the pupils. However some older pupils are too dependent on calculators in aspects of their work in science.

12. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are unsatisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have satisfactory word processing skills and competence in using software. However, many pupils in Years 8 and 9 have lower standards than might be expected. Whilst they understand the concepts of databases and spreadsheets, they have not developed sufficient skills at high enough levels to make effective use of their understanding in other subjects. Pupils taking GNVQ and GCSE ICT courses are making

good use of a range of skills. Other pupils can use basic word processing skills in creating records of achievement folders, but they are not being taught how to use higher level ICT skills in other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. Attendance is good. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes, including that of boys, have improved compared to the previous inspection. Parents are very pleased with their children's personal development.

14. Pupils are right to be proud of their school. They speak enthusiastically about all of the experiences offered to them. They describe the school as friendly and their teachers as caring and helpful. They respond well to challenging work and to opportunities for individual and group work in mathematical games and investigations in science, for instance. Pupils thoroughly enjoy participating in the various sports, dramatic and musical activities and other clubs run by the school. They generally have very positive attitudes towards their studies and want to do well. For example, in food technology lessons pupils take great pride in the food products they prepare and in other design and technology lessons they show a high level of interest and involvement as a result of the good quality display materials provided by teachers. Pupils' very good conduct in lessons means that little time is wasted, and they learn well.

15. Behaviour in and out of lessons is almost always very good. Pupils conduct themselves in an orderly manner around the school, observe the rules and are considerate towards others. This enables them to cope with the narrow corridors and limited space in many parts of the school.

16. Pupils develop very good respect for the views and beliefs of others. They learn that others are entitled to their own opinions and listen with interest to what their peers have to say in lessons. Teachers encourage these attitudes through the range of individual and group activities in many lessons. Pupils receive appropriate counselling and guidance from adults in the school following any incidents of unacceptable behaviour or insensitive expressions. They learn to realise the effect of their actions. Those pupils who are referred to the support unit improve in their attitudes and application to work. The number of exclusions is lower than the average for secondary schools and having been excluded once, pupils rarely get themselves into that position again.

17. Relationships between pupils are very good. In many subjects there are group activities involving discussion and practical work and on those occasions pupils get on well together and are co-operative and mutually supportive. Incidents of bullying are rare and the number of recorded racist remarks made in school is very few.

18. Pupils accept responsibility very well. They have responsible attitudes towards all of the tasks that they are asked to carry out, such as reception duty and homework. They are sympathetic to the plight of others and support charitable causes. Some are given special responsibility, for instance as Head Boy and Girl, as prefects and as members of the school council, and these pupils carry out their duties very maturely.

19. Attendance is above the average for secondary schools. A small but significant amount of absence is attributed to families who choose to take holidays during school time. Unauthorised absence is less than the average for secondary schools. Almost all pupils arrive promptly for the start of the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching is predominantly good, and it is very good in about one fifth of lessons. Teaching in over half of lessons is good and in the rest it is satisfactory. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The most consistently effective factor contributing to the good teaching is the quality of teachers' subject knowledge, and this has a significant impact on how well pupils learn. Teachers' extensive subject knowledge leads to well planned lessons in which there is a considerable amount of accurate factual information, clearly focused questions and high quality explanations that support the pace of learning. Written notes that pupils make are detailed and accurate, and this leads to good learning. Clearly, teachers are concerned that pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, should have all the information that they require to answer GCSE examination questions fully, but on occasion this leads to pupils not writing enough for themselves and to missing opportunities for independent learning, for example, in geography.

21. In English, mathematics and science, teaching is good and there has been considerable work to share effective teaching methods, particularly in mathematics and science. Teaching is very good in music, where there are very high expectations of both performance and theoretical parts of the subject. In modern foreign languages and ICT, teaching is satisfactory, and elsewhere it is good.

22. Relationships in lessons are very good, and teachers use them effectively to maintain a high standard of behaviour. Teachers treat pupils with respect, which has a positive impact on how well pupils participate in lessons. They join in discussions and offer ideas, secure in the knowledge they will be treated considerately even when they make mistakes. This contributes significantly to pupils' willingness to learn.

23. Teachers' expectations are high; work set is demanding and the pace of lessons is usually fast enough to ensure that pupils learn well. Teaching methods are varied, the work set is usually intellectually challenging and pupils respond well. Homework is set regularly and it reinforces schoolwork or provides opportunities for pupils to engage in some independent research. Recognising the school's shortage of computers, some homework tasks direct pupils to use computer databases or the Internet to research for themselves, or to word process their written work. Teachers generally mark pupils' work regularly and frequently. They generally provide useful feedback to help pupils improve. In history, for example, day-to-day marking links performance to National Curriculum Levels and provides specific detail on what pupils need to do to make further progress and reach higher levels.

24. The generally high quality of teaching results in good learning in which pupils acquire a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding, the exception being in ICT, where there are insufficient opportunities to develop skills.

25. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good, and the work set is matched to their needs. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are detailed and teachers' knowledge of pupils' learning needs is good. Learning support assistants (LSAs) and teachers work well together. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson the LSA produced well written support materials and in a religious education lesson, the LSA and teacher planned the lesson together. The needs of those who have other difficulties are well met, and this applies equally to the highest attainers. Teachers identify needs and specialist staff work effectively to ensure that pupils are not excluded or disadvantaged in any way. A few IEPs are not quite up to date, mainly because the school's efforts to provide a realistic curriculum for these pupils has moved a little faster than the IEP review system.

26. Most teachers place high importance on pupils' literacy competencies. Inaccurate spellings are pointed out in many subjects, though pupils are not always urged to look for patterns in words or given help with them. In history, there is good use of writing frames to help pupils to develop more confidence in extended writing. In geography, some younger pupils use creative writing to show the effects of extreme weather conditions. Teachers of information technology and business studies make sure that pupils know how to write different types of letters. English teachers adopt a clear plan for all their lessons in Key Stage 3 where words, figures of speech and sentence structure are rigorously taught. The good examples are not always applied in all subjects.

27. The teaching of numeracy skills is good. In mathematics and science, pupils are taught to manipulate formulae and to draw graphs and bar charts. In food technology, pupils develop good number skills when undertaking measuring, weighing and timing. In other aspects of their design and technology work, pupils are taught scaling and how to calculate angles and areas. In geography, they make good use of bar charts and graphs, and learn how to collect and analyse numerical information as part of their work. In business studies, work involves estimations, calculations of profit and loss and also of production times; pupils work confidently with the range of number tasks provided. In all other subjects, satisfactory use is made of mathematics, including number.

28. Little use is made of ICT in the teaching of other subjects, apart from science. Departments are restricted by the limited number of computers available in their classrooms, as well as the lack of access to the two computer rooms. There are no interactive white boards or data projectors, which might encourage further use of ICT in teaching.

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

29. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good overall. The governors and the head teacher operate a policy of annual consultation and review to ensure that the curriculum meets the particular needs, interests and aptitudes of all pupils. This includes those with special educational needs, both those with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented. The exception is in ICT where statutory requirements are not met.

30. The breadth and balance of the whole curriculum is good overall, though it is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7, 8 and 9. The Years 7 to 9 curriculum is satisfactory, and it contains all the required subjects of the National Curriculum. The addition of drama enriches provision in English. There are minor problems of equality of opportunity in physical education, where boys do not experience dance and girls cannot study orienteering. Generally, the school works effectively to provide pupils with a curriculum to suit their needs and to ensure that pupils can make the most from the experiences they are given. The school has a learning support unit that is very effective in supporting and helping pupils who have been identified as having long or short term learning difficulties of all kinds.

31. Teaching time is a little below average, especially in Years 10 and 11. The school has already reorganised its teaching day to increase the time available for lessons, and this involved reducing the length of the lunch hour. Nevertheless, the school commits ten per cent of time to religious education, which puts pressure on other parts of the curriculum. As a result, there is not sufficient time to teach physical education to the depth required for the National Curriculum, and time for careers work in Years 7 to 9 is limited. However, because most pupils are brought by school bus, the length of the school day is effectively limited by the time at which the bus company is willing to drop and pick up pupils.

32. The school has made a satisfactory start to implementing the literacy strategy. Most classrooms display the technical terms that are relevant to the subject. There has been guidance to help teachers devise ways of improving pupils' reading and writing for some time. However, there is no monitoring system to ensure that the policy operates consistently. The teaching of numeracy is well established in most subjects. All pupils with special educational needs who have individual education plans have detailed targets for improving their numeracy skills.

33. Only pupils in Year 7 have sufficient time for specific ICT lessons, with one lesson per week. In Years 8 and 9, the one lesson per fortnight is not enough time for pupils to satisfactorily complete the National Curriculum programme of study. Pupils not taking examination courses – 60 per cent in Year 10 and 85 per cent in Year 11 - have no taught ICT, and hence they underachieve in the subject. Some subjects have planned use of ICT. In science, for example, pupils use data logging, in history pupils can research World War 1 with a CD-ROM, and in English, pupils are able to use word processing and desktop publishing to present their work. Nevertheless, planned use of ICT is unsatisfactory and is restricted by limited numbers of computers and insufficient access to those available. The school does not monitor ICT across the curriculum to identify elements of the subject taught. In spite of present deficiencies in ICT, progress has been made since the last inspection. There are now more computers and some ICT is taught.

34. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is rich and varied, offering an unusually wide range of choices for a relatively small school. This has been achieved by good use of local opportunities and a willingness to exploit the flexibility in statutory requirements. The maximum number of examination courses available at the moment is 12. A maximum of ten is available within the normal curriculum, but some pupils take science early and music is available after school. One department, history, offers a Certificate of Attainment course for those of low prior attainment who are unlikely to perform well in GCSE courses.

35. Some pupils follow alternative, predominantly vocational, courses to the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11, for example, ASDAN, work placements and college courses. The quality and range of vocational courses offered by the school is very good and represents a model of good practice. Pupils can take National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses, including bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, ICT, motor vehicle engineering, bakery, hairdressing, catering, childcare and plumbing. The school provides GNVQ courses, and teaches intermediate business studies and health and social care. The organisation and management of courses is very good, and the quality of the business education course has been praised by the external assessor.

36. Vocational courses are now followed by one tenth of Year 10 and represent a considerable strength of the school's curriculum. The school has excellent relationships with a local college of extended education which provides a full day for pupils to attend the college. The timetables of the school and college are different so some pupils miss a very few lessons in subjects that they are following to GCSE. The school provides 'catch-up time' to support those pupils who have missed schoolwork; those pupils who do not keep up with their school subjects are not allowed to go to college. The school and college monitor pupils closely. A particular strength is the appointment of a full time co-ordinator who is always in college when pupils are there. Pupils following this vocational route have individually negotiated programmes of study. The management team is now considering proposals to improve its vocational curriculum further.

37. Provision for out-of-class activities is good. The school offers religious retreats, sports, residential visits, departmental trips abroad, concerts, drama, clubs and societies. The level of participation is high.

38. Provision for careers education and guidance is good overall, and schemes of work for the programme are thorough, relevant and well designed. There is insufficient time available in Years 7, 8 and 9, where careers education appears occasionally in the personal, social and health education programme. The quality of work done in Year 9 is good, and pupils use a computer programme to plan ahead and access career information. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from an effective programme of visiting speakers, taster days at college, practice interviews with college staff and employers, advice from the school Careers Officer, and work experience. Tameside Trident Trust provides considerable support in finding work placements. This extensive programme gives pupils valuable insights into self-image and career aspirations, which prepares them well for the world of work. The school's careers guidance provision and the attitudes of its pupils have attracted praise from Tameside College and Ashton-under-Lyne Sixth Form College.

39. The quality of pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. The content of the programme covers all the required strands, such as personal hygiene, sex education, bullying, drugs misuse, citizenship and various social issues. There is useful input from external specialist agencies such as the police. Form tutors and religious education staff are responsible for teaching PSHE, supported by a good range of learning resources, many of which have been specifically developed for the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is generally taught well and pupils' learning is good. However, some parts of the curriculum would benefit from specialist teaching. Overall, PSHE makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

40. The school successfully creates an ethos in which the pupils thrive; consequently the personal development of the pupils is very good. The rites and practices of the Roman Catholic Church inform the school's mission statement. This is successfully translated into practice through carefully planned and well-implemented policies related to the personal development of pupils and well supported by the whole staff. The statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is met in full.

41. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good and in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Learning support staff provide a high level of help and guidance to ensure that the great majority of pupils with learning difficulties are able to experience the full curriculum. This is done through a well-planned programme of individual literacy support in Year 7, support in mainstream lessons and withdrawal from lessons for specific help. A small number of pupils, 36 in total, do not experience the full National Curriculum. Alternative arrangements for them are good and include extended work in basic skills in school, support for subjects they have chosen in Years 10 and 11 and, for some, vocational training at a local college.

42. The spiritual development of the pupils is carefully fostered and is very good. Pupils see religious values as something that they all share and which help make them better people. Gospel values are translated into very good moral development through the specifically Christian ethos that governs relationships within the school: the caring attitudes of staff and pupils to each other; the positive value placed on each individual and the certainty of forgiveness. Staff are good role models for pupils' development. The school does not court publicity for the considerable funds raised voluntarily by pupils each year for charitable purposes. Nevertheless, a junior branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society was actively engaged in raising funds for a Christmas Party for senior citizens, and a 'shoebox' appeal for children in the Balkans was under way during the inspection. A number of subjects, such as geography and history, plan for the moral development of pupils by facing them with major issues of world population, sustainable development and war and peace.

43. The social development of pupils is very good. The school's ethos, the very good moral development and the expectation that pupils behave well and treat each other with respect have a strong impact. This is evident in the considerate way pupils treat visitors and the

moderation and consideration they show when moving around the buildings between lessons. Behaviour in the dining hall and the restricted corridor for queuing is restrained, sensible and cheerful. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are provided, for example, to be prefects, manage the careers library, and to organise charity work. They are observed to support the younger pupils. Pupils habitually co-operate in pairs and groups in class, where boys and girls are expected to sit together; this makes an important contribution to supporting boys' achievement. The very high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils makes a significant contribution to teaching and learning.

44. Cultural development is satisfactory. There is a good range of after-class activities that include visits to theatres, concerts, museums, and an annual school musical or drama performance that involves large numbers of pupils. There are some good opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures, their beliefs, values and ways of life. In geography, for example, pupils learn about the ways of life of people in other parts of the world and the impact of industrial processes on their ways of life. In art, pupils learn about the work of early Aboriginal, Italian and Egyptian artists. However, provision is not planned at whole school level so what happens in individual subjects is not co-ordinated across the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school's arrangements for pupils' welfare are broadly satisfactory, although there are some areas for improvement. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are good, and procedures for assessment have improved since the last inspection. Parents are pleased with the quality of pastoral care and support that pupils receive.

46. Child protection procedures are well managed. However, health and safety procedures are not sufficiently effective. There are insufficient adults who are fully qualified to apply first aid. Procedures to assess potential risks to pupils and adults using the building are not secure. For example, instances of loose flooring blocks, doors that open into corridors, and toilet doors that cannot be locked are not observed and recorded in a systematic manner. There is no regular and frequent tour of the building by representatives of governors and staff, or the school council, to highlight areas of concern and plan to deal with them.

47. Pastoral care is of a high standard. Form and year tutors give a high level of support for pupils, monitoring and helping with academic progress and providing guidance and support for personal issues. The constructive, trusting and mutually respectful relationships between all adults and pupils in the school are the basis of an environment that is calm and conducive to learning and in which pupils feel secure and valued.

48. The procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory overall. There is a realistic expectation that parents contact the school as soon as they know their child is going to be absent and the school has a policy of contacting parents if there is no message. However, daily attendance registers are not fully completed and reasons for absence are not always accurately recorded. The computerised system is used to record attendance but not to its full extent to provide information to closely analyse trends and follow up absence. Nevertheless, good attendance is promoted through the use of league tables but mainly by providing teaching and other experiences in school that lead to pupils' enjoyment and consequently a desire to be in school.

49. Behaviour is very well monitored and promoted. All teachers have high expectations of pupils to behave well and also apply the school's policy of assertive discipline in an effective manner. Sanctions are applied sensitively and with the purpose of support for improvement rather than as a punishment. The 'Ambrose Suite' is a support unit to which some pupils are referred for one-to-one help with their individual difficulties. It very successfully enables pupils

to manage themselves more confidently and to re-integrate with their peers. Good and improved behaviour, achieved often in collaboration with parents, is recognised and celebrated.

50. The school very successfully keeps bullying to a low level. The quality of relationships, the established respect for each other seen throughout the school and the confidence that most pupils have to report incidents to teachers, the school nurse or the chaplain are very effective in ensuring incidences are rare and are dealt with quickly when they arise.

51. Pupils receive very good advice and guidance. The school provides a comprehensive programme of advice for pupils and their parents for subject choices at GCSE and for further education and careers at age 16. There is a high level of involvement in out of lesson activities, much of it stemming from pupils' own interests, but also supported by staff and guided to help pupils achieve a balance between schoolwork and other activities so that pupils' progress does not suffer. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to work and play together in pairs, groups and teams and to develop their experiences of mutual support and co-operation. Pupils are offered many opportunities for responsibility in and out of school and to support others in need. The school recognises and praises pupils' personal development with certificates and awards and keeps detailed records of pupils' involvement in the responsibilities they assume and success they enjoy.

52. The school's procedures for monitoring, supporting and assessing pupils' academic progress are good. At a whole school level, there is now a wealth of data available on pupils' prior attainment, including results from attainment tests and teacher assessments in primary schools and the results from cognitive ability testing. This information is then processed to produce predicted grades for departments, teachers and pupils. Close liaison with the local education authority (LEA) has produced a significant improvement in the availability of assessment data on pupils who come into the school from outside the catchment area. This has been important in enabling the school to construct reasonably accurate baseline information from which it can track pupils' progress. This is now available to all staff on a commercial assessment program, but restricted staff room accommodation, and a limited number of computers, makes it more difficult than it should be for teachers to access the information.

53. The careful analysis of examination performance is a well-established culture in the school. Results are processed in order to provide indications of the value added on a subject, teacher and individual pupil basis. The school's senior management team conducts annual reviews of examination performance. In Years 7-9, the school has recently introduced a policy that 'key homework' in Years 8 and 9 should be marked using national curriculum Levels, but as yet there are inconsistencies between departments. Assessment arrangements are good in most departments, satisfactory in design and technology and English, but unsatisfactory in ICT where teachers do not use the expected levels of the National Curriculum in setting work or targets. There is some excellent practice in art, where the teacher concerned has developed a colour-coded system linked to National Curriculum Levels and simplified descriptions of what pupils should be able to do. It makes it easier for teachers to identify quickly the National Curriculum Level reached by each pupil, and gives them clear guidance in setting specific targets for their future development.

54. The school uses assessment information satisfactorily to aid curriculum planning although practice is not yet consistent across all departments. The school is consulting on the adoption of a more sophisticated system of predicting attainment and some subjects, for example, science and design and technology, have recently set up pupil tracking procedures. It is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

55. The partnership between parents and school is effective. Parents hold the school in high regard and are very supportive. The standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained.

56. Parents are right to be very pleased with the quality of education that the school provides and the values of the Catholic Church that the school very effectively promotes. They believe that their children are well cared for and that the school is steadily improving. They say the school is very approachable and sensitive to them.

57. The school keeps parents well informed. The very thorough induction process for new pupils ensures that parents know clearly what to expect and what will be expected of them. Communications are frequent, either individually or through regular publications including a magazine produced by the pupils. Annual school reports provide information about pupils' levels of attainment or grades, though some do not adequately describe what pupils know, understand and can do. Areas for improvement are frequently not specific to the subject. Many parents are disappointed that they are not able to retain a copy of the report, as they are required to return it to the school with their comments. An interim report, issued at the end of the calendar year, is a helpful indicator to parents about the progress that pupils are making. Pupils' logbooks are another good source of information that parents and teachers use well.

58. The school arranges workshops for parents to inform them about Years 10 and 11. They learn about what is to be taught, what study skills are involved, revision expectations and how parents can support and encourage their children. Arrangements are made for parents to be appropriately involved in their children's subject choices and post 16 education and careers.

59. Parents' support for and attendance at the various meetings, activities and events are very good. The parents' and teachers' association raises substantial funds to assist the school and improve resources. Parents are requested to complete evaluation returns, for example about parents' evenings, but the school does not periodically ascertain how satisfied all parents are with the various aspects of the school's work.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher and leadership team provide very clear direction for the work of the school. Responsibilities of all staff are clearly defined, and have developed since the last inspection to incorporate monitoring and evaluation. This is seen as an integral part of the school's drive to continue to raise standards. Staff work closely together and have established effective systems to share good practice and improve standards. The majority of subjects are very well managed, with staff evaluating pupils' performance and planning improvements. The exception is in ICT, where management is unsatisfactory and there is no effective review of standards or provision that could lead to improvement.

61. The school improvement plan is detailed and provides a clear picture of what the school needs to do to improve further. Priorities in the improvement plan are realistic and reflect issues raised by the inspection. Staff are aware of the school's priorities, and departmental development plans reflect school aims for improvement. This is a result of the leadership team working closely with staff to ensure that improvement planning from all areas of the school matches the identified priorities of the school improvement plan. The

governors work very closely with the school to plan its improvement and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. A number of governors visit the school regularly and have established valuable links that help keep the whole governing body well informed in its decision-making processes.

62. The weaknesses in ICT are fully recognised and the school's plans to improve the accommodation include alterations to existing buildings to provide more space for computers. The leadership team is also aware of the management weaknesses in the subject, have worked hard to resolve them and have further plans to make appointments to manage the subject across the whole school.

63. The school's targets for improved performance are ambitious. Examination and other assessment information is analysed and the information shared with all staff to help in the overall drive towards raising standards. Increasingly, the information is used to find out where performance could improve and to set targets for pupils, subjects, teachers and classes. The analyses are used constructively to inform departmental and school development planning.

64. Overall, staffing is satisfactory. The school has sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff to meet the needs of its timetabled curriculum. Design and technology has insufficient technical staff; the existing staff is efficient and provides a good level of support. In ICT, staffing is unsatisfactory because the work of the many teachers involved is not co-ordinated well enough, with the result that there is insufficient continuity of learning. When short-term vacancies have arisen, it has sometimes proved impossible to recruit temporary staff appropriately qualified in the subject they are covering. Support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. There are sufficient administrative staff to support the work of the school.

65. The school has achieved Investor in People status, and continues to give good support to the professional development of all staff. Some ninety per cent of staff members have received or will receive some form of professional training from the Standards Fund budget in the current financial year. Courses have been intended to support the school improvement plan as well as national issues, such as educational inclusion. The induction of newly qualified teachers is supported through the training programmes provided by the Tameside Local Education Authority and by the RC Diocese of Salford. Performance management is closely linked to the school's strategy for the monitoring of teaching and learning. All teachers have been observed teaching by senior staff and have performance management targets. In addition, observation of teaching is increasingly taking place within departments and plays an active part in sharing effective practice and identifying what does not work so well. In science, for example, classroom observation plays an important part in improving teaching and raising standards. Administrative staff and learning support assistants are also supported through training. An area of expertise in ICT, for example, has been identified to help office staff handle and analyse the increasing amount of information, particularly attendance, they have to deal with.

66. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall, mainly because numbers of pupils in the school have risen. It is satisfactory in only a very few departments. There are insufficient or inadequate facilities for art, and some aspects of design and technology, physical education, drama and music. Some science lessons are taught in rooms which are not laboratories, there is only one specialist geography room and several other classrooms are too small for the size of classes using them. The library is attractive and well organised, but it is small for the numbers of pupils trying to use it. ICT rooms lack office and storage facilities. The school organises pupils' movement around school between lessons and at the beginning and end of school effectively. This is essential because there are some narrow corridors where there is a risk of congestion and some doors open out on to corridors causing a

potential hazard. Nevertheless, there have been some improvements to accommodate increased numbers and changing curriculum demands. The school has a rolling three-year development plan that has achieved improvements, the next part of which is the building of a block of new rooms.

67. Resources are satisfactory overall. Spending on resources has been average but has increased in the present year and is now above average. Library provision has improved. It is a good resource for learning and is popular with pupils, though it lacks sufficient multicultural and physical education books. Resources are good in PHSE, and broadly satisfactory elsewhere. There are too few text subjects in geography and modern foreign languages and ICT resources are limited. Some of the equipment used in design and technology is outdated. However, the school uses its resources very efficiently.

68. There are appropriate procedures that lead to secure financial management of the school. A three-year planning cycle, based on the school improvement plan, ensures that planned expenditure is closely linked to identified priorities. Before final agreement, all aspects of planned expenditure are discussed and approved by the governing body. Allocation to faculties is equitable and based on faculty development plans. The school's finance team, consisting of the head teacher, an assistant head teacher and the bursar, monitors spending of the current budget on a weekly basis. In turn, the finance committee of the governors monitors spending on a termly basis. Only minor issues were raised in the last full audit carried out in 1998, and all of these issues were subsequently dealt with satisfactorily. The school operates efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The organisation and administration is good, enabling teachers to work with a minimum of disruption.

69. This is an effective school. Standards of attainment and achievement of the majority of pupils are good throughout the school and have improved since the last inspection. Teaching is good and management is effective. Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good. There are some weaknesses in the provision for ICT and in the accommodation. Although the expenditure per pupil is marginally above average, the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. This is a school that is aware of the issues it needs to address in order to improve further. The school improvement plan identifies most of the issues raised during the inspection, and the ethos of the school is one of continually looking for ways to improve. The school and governors must now:

- Raise standards in ICT by:
(Paragraphs: 12, 28, 33, 62, 64, 162, 163)
 - * ensuring statutory requirements are met at both key stages;
 - * assessing pupils' performance so that pupils and teachers are fully aware of what pupils need to do to raise standards;
 - * increasing the teaching time for the subject;
 - * monitoring provision of ICT throughout the school to identify what skills are taught in each subject and in separate ICT lessons;
 - * ensuring that there is effective management of all elements of the subject;
 - * increasing the numbers of computers;
 - * increasing the accommodation for computers so that there is improved access for pupils.
- Improve accommodation by working with the local authority and the diocese to explore ways in which existing accommodation can be better used or can be increased.
(Paragraph: 66)

71. The school should also consider the following minor issues:

- improving the curriculum by increasing time for careers work and physical education in Years 10 and 11;
(Paragraphs: 31, 187)
- ensuring that statements for pupils with special educational needs match the school's admirable intentions to provide alternative curriculum arrangements to better serve their educational needs;
(Paragraph: 25)
- arranging for parents to keep a copy of annual progress reports about their children;
(Paragraph: 57)
- monitoring attendance and ensuring completion of registers in accordance with statutory requirements;
(Paragraph: 48)
- establishing regular procedures for risk assessments around the school premises;
(Paragraph: 46)
- increasing the numbers of first aiders;
(Paragraph: 46)
- ensuring that the ICT skills of administrative staff are matched to the needs of the school.
(Paragraph: 65)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Community Education

72. The school has developed some very good community links with partner institutions, and has adopted an innovative approach to developing links with its feeder schools. Pupils from one of the main feeder schools, St Stephens, attend a three-day induction period when they experience a range of subjects. This extended time allows pupils to complete NFER reading tests as well as 'Bubbles', a science bridging course on which the school has been working with St Stephens for the past two years. A joint residential retreat, involving pupils of St Stephens and St. Damian's, allows pupils to take part in spiritual and physical activities supported by teachers from both schools. The summer school gives gifted and talented pupils from four partner feeder schools a range of opportunities for study in more depth. Two teachers from St. Damian's visit the four partner schools on a regular basis; one teacher supports the teaching of science, whilst the other works with pupils to develop their thinking skills.

73. The school has developed very good links with Tameside College to make provision for a range of NVQ courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Thirty-five pupils attend the college to take courses in motor vehicles, information technology, hairdressing and carpentry.

74. The school is involved in a joint partnership with Stoneyhurst College and St. Mary's Hall School (Stoneyhurst) under a funded DfEE programme, 'Raising Standards Through Partnership'. The objectives are to raise standards of achievement through pastoral and curriculum structures. The importance of the project for St. Damian's has been to focus on the underachievement of boys. Twenty pupils have visited Stoneyhurst for a two-day residential retreat, and Stoneyhurst pupils and staff have visited St. Damian's. The project is well planned to encourage the sharing of good practice between the three schools, with the intention of raising standards in English, mathematics and science.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	131
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	30	73	26	0	0	0
Percentage	1	23	56	20	0	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	756
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	81

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	80

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	92.9	School data	0.6
National comparative data	90.9	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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	79	71	150

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	44	55	54
	Girls	58	56	53
	Total	102	111	107
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	68 (83)	74 (69)	72 (65)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	41 (35)	51 (43)	35 (30)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	52	54	58
	Girls	60	56	55
	Total	112	110	113
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	75 (74)	73 (73)	75 (69)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	39 (54)	49 (45)	35 (35)
	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 registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	67	69	136

GCSE results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	30	62	64
	Girls	34	64	68
	Total	64	126	132
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	47 (48)	93 (94)	97 (97)
	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 per pupil	School	39 (38)
	National	39 (38)

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	748
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	30	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes:****Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

Education support staff:**Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	124.5

Deployment of teachers:**Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.3
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Average teaching group size:**Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	24.1
Key Stage 4	20.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1,894,201.00
Total expenditure	1,844,958.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,559.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	27,521.00
Balance carried forward to next year	76,764.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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
Number of questionnaires returned

756
258

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	39	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	59	36	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	42	1	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	48	8	2	2
The teaching is good.	56	38	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	44	10	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	26	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	18	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	45	6	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	73	24	1	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	36	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	41	10	2	6

At the meeting with parents before the inspection, the overwhelming response was positive. The one minor issue raised was that when reports on their children are sent home each year, parents are expected to sign and return them. They would appreciate having a copy to keep.

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

ENGLISH

75. The quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils achieve very well in examinations in GCSE English literature.
- There is consistently good teaching in all year groups in the school.
- Pupils show a very good attitude to learning in most lessons, and work well individually and in groups.

Areas for improvement:

- To ensure that lessons all end with a review of learning, to focus pupils on ways to develop further.

76. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils have obtained well above average standards in recent years with the exception of 2001 when results were average. Nevertheless, standards in 2001 were broadly average compared with similar schools. The large majority of pupils made good progress from below average levels of attainment on entry to the school. In recent years, results in the GCSE examination in English have been above average. However, they were below average in 2001, which represented unsatisfactory progress from the end of Year 9. By comparison, pupils' achievement in English literature was outstanding, with a very large proportion of the same pupils gaining grades A*-C.

77. Boys have attained higher than average levels in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 over recent years. They have performed less well in GCSE English but their performance has been above average in English Literature, especially in 2001. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, with a substantial number gaining grades D - G. This is the result of very structured teaching and close supervision and guidance during lessons.

78. Standards in all aspects of English seen in lessons are above average by age thirteen. Pupils express themselves clearly using a wide-ranging vocabulary, which gives them the confidence to take part in lessons. Teachers give them plenty of chances to work in groups and in whole class discussions to practise their speaking and listening. For instance, one girl in Year 7 was able to describe the way that an author had added pace to the scene. 'He used short, snappy sentences to move the story along,' she said. The class teacher used this idea to draw the rest of the pupils into a discussion. Pupils listen well and the teacher's excellent reading of novels and poems makes it easy for them. A lower ability group in Year 9, containing pupils with special educational needs, listened carefully to a powerful reading of the war poem, 'Dulce et decorum est'. As a result one girl was able to provide a succinct account of the poem's main message. The teacher did not allow the pace of the lesson to drop, and pupils were given a step-by-step approach that allowed them to see the poem's main ideas.

79. Reading is at least average in most groups in Key Stage 3. Some higher attaining pupils read poetry with great verve. In studying 'Anthem for doomed youth', pupils showed very good understanding of how words and images have to be crafted into a poem before the writer feels satisfied with the result. In looking at two different versions of this poem, a bright Year 9 class were clear that 'doomed' was a better word to use than 'dead' in the title because the word carries an ominous and menacing ring to it. One girl went on to point out

that the word 'patter' had an onomatopoeic quality that linked well with 'stuttering rifles' rapid rattle'. This class relished the challenge of the task. Provision for reading is satisfactory, and pupils are well supported in the learning resource centre by a very knowledgeable librarian.

80. Pupils make good progress in their writing. By the time they reach the age of thirteen, they write neatly and spell most words accurately. Lower attaining pupils have more difficulty with spelling, and even some more able pupils miss letters out of longer words such as, 'accommodation' and 'committed', but generally spelling is good. There are examples of very sensitive poetry composed about tragic world events, such as the disaster in New York on September 11th. Response to war poetry is often very well written. Some of the jointly composed poems on 'Dreams' contained vivid imagery such as 'a world blanketed with a black velvet quilt.' Pupils use thesauruses without prompting, and many can produce very good instances of empathy in their writing. For example, after some thorough background research into the life of the Brontes, one pupil opened her essay about 'Jane Eyre': 'Anger, frustration, fear. Why must I endure these feelings?' The rest of the account showed good knowledge of the book and the period. Literature is very well taught from Year 7 and pupils are confident in writing essays about structure and style as well as character and plot.

81. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a good understanding of literature and can describe how language conveys mood and character. Standards of reading continue to be at least sound and sometimes good. Drama makes a good contribution to pupils' confidence in speaking, listening and reading. Pupils read well in assemblies, and their speaking and listening becomes more highly developed. In Year 10, a middle ability group produced a very good trial scene from 'An Inspector Calls'. This involved the whole class and was well directed by a boy in the class. The teacher helped him to ensure that all pupils were included in the oral task. Although several pupils struggled to move from reading the written script to more improvised work, a few did so, showing above average attainment. In some classes, however, a small number of boys are reluctant to learn and take a lot of the teacher's time while they look for ways of avoiding the effort of working. Further proof of this is seen in the uncompleted work in a minority of books, usually the boys.

82. Writing in Years 10 and 11 is generally good in literature, where pupils support their ideas with close reference to the text. Pupils' writing varies from very good to pedestrian in English. Some of the media analysis requires a lot of teacher support and, though the marking is helpful and supportive, pupils need more practice in writing factual accounts about media activities. There are very good examples of creative writing from the top sets in Years 10 and 11, where the use of realistic dialogue brings stories to life. Other pupils find it hard to reproduce the standards of the literature work. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their writing because teachers ensure that the tasks are short and help to build up pupils' confidence in a systematic way. Teachers use writing frames sensibly and continually reinforce basic literacy skills in lessons.

83. A large number of pupils in all year groups use word processors very effectively on their own initiative, and this results in high quality presentation of writing. However, there is no planned teaching of ICT in English beyond a rota for pupils operating in Year 8, and so not all pupils have the same opportunity to use this facility.

84. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and very good in nearly a third of lessons. Most of the very good lessons occur in Key Stage 3. Teachers know their subject well and have agreed a consistent structure to all lessons, based on the literacy strategy. Most lessons are typified by very good classroom management, which gives pupils the security to work well. They are confident to ask questions where they are unsure. Lessons are varied and most have a brisk pace that keeps pupils fully engaged on tasks. Many lessons are lively and include role-play and group work, with all pupils taking a full part in the learning. Occasional lessons end in a rush, with some pupils chatting to each other or without being given a clear summary of what is to happen next. In the good lessons,

teachers send pupils away buzzing with anticipation, but in a few they do not leave them with a real sense of what comes next.

85. The introduction of the literacy strategy in Years 7 to 9 is proving effective in English and drama. The school has been working on a whole school literacy policy for some time already. Many departments, such as science, history, music and design and technology have established good practice that includes posting on walls the key words relating to the subject, and pupils' written work improves as a result. There are also some examples in geography of pupils using creative writing to gain a greater understanding of weather features, as in the example, 'Violent waves wash against the sea wall / A seagull crying, an overhead call.' However, the lack of systematic monitoring of the literacy policy means that not all departments apply the principles with the same rigour, though monitoring is planned in the near future.

86. The leadership and management of the English department are good. Teachers work well as a team and there is a good corporate spirit. Pupils enjoy the subject and are encouraged to work hard. Teaching and learning are evaluated regularly, and this has eliminated the unsatisfactory teaching reported at the last inspection. There is still too little planned development of ICT. Overall, the good features reported at the last inspection have been sustained and some aspects have moved forward. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

87. The provision for mathematics is good.

Strengths:

- National Curriculum test and GCSE examination results are improving.
- Attainment of most pupils is above average by the end of Year 9.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress.
- Teaching is mainly of good quality.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and behave very well.
- The faculty is well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in GCSE.
- Opportunities for pupils to take initiative and responsibility for their learning.
- Use of ICT.
- Aspects of the accommodation.

88. Standards of attainment in mathematics of the majority of pupils by the end of Year 9 are above the national average. The percentages of pupils who achieve Levels 5 and 6 or above in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are rising. In 2001, they were above average when compared to all schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 6 or above in 2001 was well above average. Since the majority of these pupils entered the school with broadly average levels of attainment, they made good progress in Years 7 to 9. Some higher attaining pupils made very good progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at this stage.

89. Standards of attainment in mathematics of the majority of pupils by the end of Year 11 are average. The percentages of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C have risen, and were broadly at the national average in 2001. The school enters all of its Year 11 pupils for the GCSE examination in mathematics. The percentages of pupils who gain grades in the range A*-G are above the national average. A satisfactory number of pupils gained the highest grades in the GCSE examination in 2001. However, in a number of years, the proportion of pupils gaining these grades has been low. Boys and girls perform equally well in the GCSE examination. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also satisfactory at this stage.

90. Standards of work seen are above the expected level in Years 7 to 9. Some of the work being carried out by pupils in the highest sets is of a particularly high standard. For example, pupils in a high attaining Year 9 group were undertaking work in statistics. Pupils in the class were able to collect real data relating to dates of birth, group them and calculate means. The majority of pupils has a secure understanding of the principles involved, and was able to apply these to complete a range of increasingly complex examples without further assistance from the teacher. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of all required aspects, including algebra, shape, space and measures. They are able to use and apply mathematics to a range of increasingly complex situations. Standards of numeracy are rising, both on entry to the school and particularly for those pupils in Years 7 to 9. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are at the expected level. Pupils in a middle attaining Year 11 group for example were undertaking work involving the drawing of three-dimensional figures. Pupils used squared and isometric paper for the drawing of the figures. Most but not all of the pupils were able to accurately draw the figures without any significant help from the teacher.

91. Teaching is good for classes in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. All lessons are well planned. During the group work, teachers give clear explanations. Good use is made of prepared overhead projector transparencies to support aspects of the teaching. In most lessons, there is significant use of questioning of the pupils to test their level of understanding. Homework is regularly set, marked and returned to the pupils. However, in a number of classes, particularly in Years 10 and 11, some pupils make either poor or nil responses to the homework that is set. Opportunities to consolidate the work undertaken in classes by these pupils are therefore missed. Also not all teachers' marking is carried out in accordance with the faculty policy of using percentages. Teachers keep good records of individual pupils' progress.

92. Supportive relationships are developed between pupils and with the teacher. Management of pupils is effective and very high standards of discipline are maintained throughout the school. There is an appropriate range of learning approaches in most classes. However, teachers use a greater variety of activities with pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. In these years, a range of activities has been devised, which pupils undertake individually, in small groups and as a class. Some of these activities involve the playing of games and are both effective and are enjoyed by the pupils. On the other hand, several classes were seen particularly in Years 10 and 11 in which pupils were closely directed by the teacher and in which pupils were not able to show initiative or sufficient independence. Additionally the teaching of some classes is shared between two members of staff, and this has an adverse effect on teaching and learning, particularly the continuity for the pupils. Teachers in the faculty provide significant support to pupils outside their normal lessons when they require it.

93. With very few exceptions, pupils have a positive attitude to their work in mathematics. Behaviour in classes is very good. Most pupils are well motivated and a number of pupils show a level of enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils are attentive during the group work, sustain concentration and are able to complete the tasks that are set for them to undertake on an individual basis. Pupils are able to work collaboratively in small groups on activities

particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. In a few classes, pupils are passive and fail to contribute significantly to the development of the topic during aspects of group work.

94. The management of the department is good, and teachers work well as a team. They meet on a regular basis to discuss and resolve relevant issues when appropriate. There are a number of ways in which staff share good practice. Departmental meetings include the sharing of classroom experiences and the activities thought to have been particularly successful. Each member of staff has observed another member of staff teach, and the head of department has carried out formal lesson observations. Test and examination results are reviewed on an annual basis. Teachers in the department are well qualified. Teaching rooms are close together and, with the significant use of display materials, this creates a physical focus for the subject in the school. However, many rooms are too small for the size of classes time-tabled in them. This results in restricted circulation areas and difficulties for teachers in gaining access to pupils who require help. There is a good range of resources to support the work of the department, although there is very poor access to modern computers. This means that the use of ICT to support teaching and learning is very restricted.

95. Detailed schemes of work have been developed to meet the needs of pupils of differing standards of attainment. Particularly in Years 7 and 8, emphasis is given to the further development of pupils' confidence and skills when undertaking work involving number. Progress has been good since the last inspection. Standards of attainment of pupils in Years 9 and 11 have risen. Test results at the end of Year 9 have risen, particularly the percentage of pupils gaining Level 6 or above. The achievement of boys and girls is now comparable, whereas girls performed significantly better than the boys at the time of the last inspection. Monitoring and evaluation procedures have been extended and improved. Although GCSE mathematics results have improved, the percentage of pupils gaining grades in the range A*-C remains marginally below the national average. Some pupils continue to have insufficient opportunities to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning. Use of ICT remains restricted and aspects of the accommodation continue to require improvement.

SCIENCE

96. The quality of provision in science is good.

Strengths:

- Teaching is good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Examination and test results are improving.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is good.
- Teamwork is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas that could be improved:

- Provision of ICT in science lessons.
- The quality of the accommodation.

97. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were above the national average for all schools nationally. They were average when compared with schools whose pupils are from similar backgrounds. Girls performed better in these tests than boys. Over the past three years, pupils' performance has improved faster than the national trend. At the end of their compulsory education, all pupils are entered for GCSE Double Award science. Results in 2001 were above the national average. Over the past three years, results have improved at a good rate. Girls tend to do better in these GCSE examinations, in line with the national

picture. Analysis of results indicates that the department is adding value in terms of these pupils' standards on entry.

98. Work scrutiny and lesson observations during the inspection indicate that standards of work of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above average for their age. Pupils enter the school with attainment in science that is average for their age. As a result of teaching that is consistently good, pupils make good progress in their lessons so that, at the end of Year 9, their attainment is above average for their age. For example, higher-attaining pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of photosynthesis. They can write equations describing the process and know the important features of plants that contribute to it. Middle-attaining pupils have a good knowledge of the effect of pollution on the environment. They can, for example, explain how acid rain is formed and how global warming affects the climate. Lower-attaining pupils use indicators competently to test for the presence of acids and alkalis. They have a good understanding of pH and can relate this to the identification of strong and weak acids and alkalis. Practical and investigative skills are above average and improving. Year 7 pupils enjoy investigating the variation in length of samples of broad beans, and are able to analyse their results graphically. Taking into account pupils' prior attainment at the start of Year 7, their achievement over time is good. They make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science in their lessons compared with their starting point.

99. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 are also above average for their age. These pupils entered the school with attainment that was lower than the present Year 7. Their knowledge and understanding of scientific theories and concepts is above what would be expected for their age. For example, higher-attaining pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of organs of the body, such as the kidneys. They are able to identify key features of the kidney and how these are important in osmo-regulation in the body. Middle-attaining pupils can work out simple molecular formulae for compounds. They can calculate their molecular mass and use this information to determine how much of a product is formed during a chemical reaction. Lower-attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of electricity in the home. They can calculate the number of electrical units used by electrical appliances, such as an electric fire. They have good enquiry skills. They can, for example, suggest factors that might effect the period of a pendulum, and plan experiments to investigate these factors. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their science lessons towards the targets set for them as the result of work that caters well for their capabilities and teaching that supports their learning. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress due to an accelerated science curriculum that effectively challenges them intellectually.

100. Pupils all display very positive attitudes to their work. They are very interested in what they are doing. For example, a Year 10 class enjoyed investigating the respiration rate of a sample of maggots using a respirometer that they had constructed. As a result, they made very good progress in their learning of respiration. Well-managed and structured lessons ensure that pupils concentrate well in class. Pupils collaborate well with each other in practical work and in oral presentations of science topics. They are invariably well behaved in their lessons. Good relationships have been established between pupils and teachers, and this helps them learn more effectively. These very positive attitudes combined with consistently good teaching enable pupils to learn well in science lessons and achieve standards that are good relative to their prior attainment.

101. Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and all teaching was at least good in all age ranges. Four of the 14 lessons observed were very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and, as a result, convey concepts to pupils with clarity. This results in pupils learning more effectively. Lessons are always well planned, with learning aims and objectives a key feature. Practical activities are well managed, with an emphasis on safety. For example, pupils are given clear risk assessments for practicals so that they are aware of any hazards

that might occur. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils in terms of behaviour and capabilities, and this is producing a good climate for learning in the department. In some lessons, however, pupils can be a little too passive in their learning and their independent learning is limited. However, teaching overall is well directed to the needs of the pupils. Homework is set and marked regularly and consolidates pupils' learning. The day-to-day marking of pupils' books and files is good and gives them an accurate picture of their standing in the subject.

102. The department makes a good contribution to the teaching of literacy. Key words are used to build up pupils' technical vocabulary, and writing frames are used to support extended writing in investigations. Pupils are given the opportunity to do pieces of extended writing. They are taught numeracy skills well through the use of formulae and graphs. There is some exposure to ICT in science, but this is rather patchy and requires further development, for example, by incorporating it into the GCSE schemes of work more extensively.

103. The department is very well managed. Very good teamwork has been established in a relatively short period of time. The science curriculum is effective for pupils of all levels of attainment. There is a good focus on the monitoring of teaching and learning to share good practice and raise standards. Assessment of pupils' work is good, and these procedures are used well to provide an appropriate science curriculum for all pupils. The department functions very well on a day-to-day basis, in spite of cramped accommodation. The laboratory technician works extremely hard to ensure the department's smooth running. Health and safety requirements are well met and pupils are able to work in safety. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The science club is very popular and extends pupils both socially and intellectually. Since the previous inspection, the department has made very good improvement. Teaching has improved dramatically. Standards of attainment are improving. The science curriculum is more effective at challenging high-attaining pupils. Behaviour in lessons is much better.

ART AND DESIGN

104. Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is good.

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and the way teachers care for the whole range of their pupils.
- The assessment of pupils' work, leading to target setting, tracking pupils' progress and modification of the curriculum.
- The use of sketchbooks to collect information and plan future work.
- Pupils' open-minded approaches to their studies.
- The relationships that exist between teachers and pupils.

Areas for improvement:

- Statutory requirements for the use of ICT in art.
- The development of drawing for different purposes.
- Pupils' personal views of other artists' work.

105. Teacher assessments show that above average numbers of pupils exceed expectations by the age of 14. These assessments are generous. By the age of 16, above average numbers were awarded GCSE passes in the A*-C range, the girls being notably more successful than the boys. Every pupil was awarded a pass between A* and G. These results are similar to those at the time of the last inspection and an improvement on 2000 when they were below average.

106. The work seen in Years 7 to 9 is close to the national average. Work in Years 10 and 11 is above average.

107. The study of art and artists is central to the department's activities. Pupils have good knowledge of European and multi-cultural art and artists from early Egyptian, Aboriginal and African art and the Italian renaissance to the present day. Nevertheless, pupils concern themselves more with biographical rather than artistic details and lack a personal view of the work.

108. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good use of sketchbooks to analyse and record information, but their drawing skills are below average. Drawing is usually in pencil and small scale. Pupils recognise the tonal qualities their pencil will produce, but some are confused between colour and tone and fail to appreciate the importance of line quality. They are comfortable in developing their ideas into paintings, collage compositions or three-dimensional work in a range of media. Much of the work illustrates their open-minded approach to new ideas, and they are happy making collages in a Cubist style or portraits from vegetation in the manner of Archimboldo.

109. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop their skills and knowledge more rapidly than in Years 7 to 9. Girls in particular make very good use of their sketchbooks for personal investigation, experimentation and research into the world around them. These older pupils have a good understanding of colour, shape and texture. They are adept at using polystyrene, plaster of Paris and tissue, along with paint and paper to create original, innovative compositions in two and three dimensions.

110. Achievement in art is good. Allowing for the mixed experiences of art they have had when they arrive in Year 7 pupils' achievement by the age of 13 is satisfactory. Fewer than average pupils opt for GCSE art, pupils in Years 10 and 11 respond to good teaching and well-designed courses, which raise standards and quicken progress. Their achievement is good. Those who have special educational needs also make good progress. Tasks are modified to suit their needs, but a more significant factor is the way their teachers respond to their needs with care and sensitivity. Gifted and talented pupils respond particularly well to the challenging work, and above average numbers gain top GCSE grades.

111. Teaching is good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is generally good and often very good. In Years 10 and 11, it is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to set work that is matched to pupils' abilities. Classes are well managed and provide many opportunities for pupils to reflect on their efforts and those of their classmates. The emphasis in many lessons is on originality and innovation. For example, pupils in a very good Year 7 lesson were making ink and chalk collage compositions, based on self-portraits in their sketchbooks. After a short introduction, the pupils were keen to proceed. They made very good gains in knowledge, using a range of unlikely recycled materials including wrapping paper and gum strip. Year 11 pupils were making very good progress working on their individual GCSE coursework.

112. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, who respond with positive attitudes to their studies. Teachers circulate in their classes, assessing, encouraging and prompting their pupils, making a significant contribution to their learning. Pupils know what they are

doing and how they might improve, and are pleased to discuss their work with visitors. They are literate and make good use of annotation in their sketchbooks. The particularly good relationships are based on teachers recognising their pupils' efforts, and pupils recognising their teachers' genuine enjoyment of their subject.

113. The curriculum allows pupils to develop their creative and critical skills, but there are insufficient opportunities to use computers to extend creativity. The systems for assessing work are outstanding, and give pupils a clear view of how well they are doing and how they might progress, as well as indicating to staff how the curriculum might be improved.

114. The department is without a head of department, but the teacher responsible for art provides good leadership and management. While her leadership is particularly good, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently formalised. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good and attainment is rising. The accommodation is unsatisfactory; the art room has insufficient storage space and the electric lighting is poor. Five classes are taught in rooms without appropriate work surfaces or water supply. Displays in the department and the public areas of the school are good. Learning resources are unsatisfactory: the shortage of computers makes delivery of the National Curriculum impossible, while the number and quality of books available in the department and the library do not meet the needs of the pupils.

115. Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection. The department continues to fail to meet statutory requirements relating to ICT and the schemes of work relating to its delivery. The kiln now meets health and safety requirements. The underachievement identified in Year 8 is no longer present. Teaching, which was occasionally unsatisfactory or poor at the last inspection, is now good and often very good. Above average numbers of pupils are gaining top GCSE grades. Expectations of pupils and teachers are high.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Standards of work seen are good and pupils have a good understanding of design and technology.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress, including those with special education needs, because the skills taught lead to more demanding tasks.
- Teaching is consistently good; lessons are planned well and proceed at a good pace.
- Leadership and management of the faculty are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Accommodation and resources in resistant materials workshops need to be improved.
- The use of computers to deliver the strands of ICT as outlined in the programmes of study for design and technology.

117. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 show that pupils' attainment was well above the national average overall, with a significant number achieving the higher levels. This is an improvement on the previous year. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were below the national average. The results were better in resistant materials where they were close to average. The results in the A*-C range show a decline over the previous year when they were in line with national averages. Nevertheless, these pupils achieved the results expected when their prior attainment is taken into account.

118. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Pupils are very enthusiastic and well motivated by the activities provided because learning is relevant and they are successful. They learn about a wide range of materials and use a good range of small and large equipment competently and safely, for example, when making electronic circuits in Year 8. They demonstrate very good graphical skills in Year 9 when sketching freehand isometric drawings. They are extremely proud of new products they have developed in food lessons. Higher achieving students plan their work and evaluate it objectively against specific criteria. Lower achieving students carefully evaluate how well they have worked. Boys and girls perform similarly.

119. By the end of Year 11, standards are broadly average. Pupils solve problems systematically. They have sufficient confidence to experiment and explore materials and processes when they develop their designs, questioning the effectiveness of each stage. The higher achieving students work well independently and are very well motivated to succeed. Their work is thoughtfully and professionally presented. Pupils have few opportunities to use ICT, particularly to present their work but also when they are designing. Their design work and practical work shows progression in development and a satisfactory level of craftsmanship in execution. The higher achieving students critically evaluate their work well. All pupils, regardless of ability or gender, achieve well because teachers expect them to learn well. Standards are higher in the graphic design option.

120. Teaching in all aspects of the subject is good overall, and in some lessons it is very good. Teachers' enthusiasm, knowledge and personal expertise engage and inspire pupils. All staff work successfully to develop productive relationships. Lessons are well planned, with learning objectives shared with pupils. Teachers build up comprehensive records of pupils' performance, which they use to give accurate advice and guidance to promote further progress. Pupils are rightly proud of what they achieve. Key learning points are systematically reinforced through clear explanation and questioning. The good range of activities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in their learning. New skills and knowledge are introduced as needed so that pupils can immediately use it to develop their understanding. In the best lessons, pupils' curiosity is encouraged through discussion and questions. The introductions to lessons are linked to previous work, giving an effective continuity that builds on pupils' prior learning. The differing needs of pupils are well met, and their designing and making skills are suitably developed. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs. They are aware of targets in their individual education plans and provide extra support so that these pupils make good progress. Teachers support literacy well and are careful to introduce new words and provide writing frames. They use technical vocabulary accurately and ensure it is used by pupils in discussing or writing about their work. There is an emphasis on health and safety during lessons. Teachers use display well in classrooms and the open areas, and this contributes considerably to pupils' interest and the development of ideas.

121. Homework contributes markedly to pupils' learning. Classes are competently managed and pupils are attentive, co-operative and eager to learn. Pupils make best progress in the lessons where activities are practical and challenging and they have opportunities to discuss their ideas with others.

122. The department is well led and managed. As a result, there has been a good improvement in standards since the last inspection. The head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed and is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in both key stages by using assessment information more to set pupils targets so that they make further progress. Information and communication technology (ICT) is underused, particularly control technology and the use of computer aided design. Improvement planning is good, focusing on the development of the curriculum and improvements in standards, indicating specific responsibilities, dates for review and completion. Department meetings are used well to discuss issues to improve policy and

standards in the subject. Accommodation and resources in workshops, including preparation area needs, are unsatisfactory and have an impact on standards achieved by pupils. There are few resources and equipment to teach computer-aided design. Several pupils do not follow the technology curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Instead they attend the local FE College, learning skills in motor vehicle engineering, building construction and other vocational areas. These pupils are very successful and achieve good grades. The technicians provide a good level of support even though the time available to carry out tasks is limited. The department has continued with improvements since the last inspection.

BUSINESS STUDIES

123. Provision is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils make good progress.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject is well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Access to ICT.

124. Pupils have average levels of skills and are confident when discussing concepts involved in their work. For example, Year 11 pupils speak confidently about how to market products using the Internet. They debate the principles of budgeting and cash flow in business, and are making good progress in developing skills in evaluating business practice. Pupils have sound skills in ICT and a good understanding of their use in business. Pupils cover the key skills adequately. The standard of pupils' work in their portfolios is good; it is well organised, well structured and well presented. Standards were below average at the last inspection and are now broadly average.

125. Learning is good. Good standards of work are produced. Pupils develop analytical thinking very well and have opportunities to explore the more abstract concepts of the subject. Progress in lessons and through modules and projects is good overall. Weaker pupils are actively supported to maintain these standards. Pupils' progress is especially good where they are actively involved in exploring themes and making decisions for themselves.

126. Teaching is good. Two lessons were seen and pupils' work was examined. The teacher has a secure knowledge of the subject and lessons are planned effectively. Lessons have clear learning objectives, the teacher uses a wide range of teaching methods that hold pupils' attention and involve them well in discussion. She is adept at intervening to provide praise, guidance and additional support whilst allowing and encouraging pupils to learn independently. Consequently pupils work hard and take a great pride in their work. Resources are used effectively.

127. The department has clear marking and assessment methods that identify clearly how well pupils perform and what they need to do to improve. The teacher uses assessment information well to help future planning and teaching. The department has effective systems to ensure that marking is consistent throughout the subject.

128. The department is efficiently and effectively managed and this has resulted in a commitment to high achievement. The qualifications and experience of the staff match the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to use computers in the department to extend their capabilities in using information technology,

although there are limitations because of the overall shortage of ICT equipment and facilities in the school.

DRAMA

129. The quality of provision in drama is good.

Strengths:

- Standards of attainment in Year 11 are high.
- The teaching is dynamic and pupils respond very well.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement:

- Pupils need more opportunities to share ideas for improving their performances with the whole group.

130. Drama is taught as a separate subject to Years 7 to 9 and is an optional GCSE course from Year 10. Standards in Years 7 to 9 meet national expectations, and some more able pupils achieve very well. Standards are much as they were at the last inspection although there have been fluctuations between years. The subject is well planned and gives pupils added opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. It also makes a very good contribution to their personal growth as they learn how to plan work in groups. Pupils enjoy drama and work hard in lessons because of the high expectations of the teacher. He is firm and gives them a clear structure within which to operate. This is vital as the working space for drama is limited.

131. In Year 7, pupils rehearse their scenes energetically and show confidence in their presentations. They are articulate and appreciate the demands of the roles they have to adopt. Most are also aware of where they are on the stage and what the audience needs. In Year 9, drama is a good vehicle for helping pupils with special educational needs to learn a range of skills, both social and intellectual. The teacher gives them a lot of responsibility for their own planning, and their response is very positive. They learn from the teacher's astute questions as he helps them to use a variety of stage equipment, such as lighting, to add authenticity to their performances.

132. Standards in GCSE were in line with the national average in 2001, though the results in the previous year had been outstanding, with all pupils gaining a pass in the A*-C range. In lessons, the attainment of pupils presently in Year 11 is above average. There are some very talented actresses in Years 10 and 11. They are versatile and have poise and presence on stage. The school encourages them to develop their skills in a wide range of activities in school and with outside groups.

133. The teaching is direct and energetic. It provides a clear framework for pupils to work within, but gives them the scope to think of their own ideas. Pupils have learned a lot about stagecraft and can apply this when planning their own acting. For example, in performances based on 'Billy Liar' in Year 10, the class had to decide what props and costume were appropriate for different decades. In 'A Taste of Honey' in Year 11, pupils showed good understanding of the importance of a set that would allow them to convey to an audience the way that characters relate to each other.

134. The very good teaching in Key Stage 4 leads to high standards. Assessment is clear and pupils know where they are at regular points during the course. They know what they need to do to achieve higher grades. The teacher gives pupils good evaluative summaries to help them improve, though they could usefully be encouraged to develop more ideas for themselves in whole-class discussions.

GEOGRAPHY

135. Provision for geography is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Standards have risen steadily since the last inspection and are continuing to rise because teachers work consistently hard.
- Teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection.
- The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning.

Areas for development:

- To develop accurate assessment procedures, expressed as levels of the National Curriculum.
- To provide sufficient fieldwork for Years 7 to 9 to support later course work and to allow pupils to apply their skills in practical situations.
- To analyse examination criteria and results to produce well defined targets for teaching and learning, so that pupils know their strengths and weaknesses and have sharp targets for improvement.

136. Attainment on entry to the school is improving and was broadly average in 2001. However, the attainment of the present Year 9 was below average when they joined the school in 1999. Many pupils in Year 7 do not know they have studied geography before. Their knowledge of place is weak and their skills vary. Consequently, it is necessary to consolidate basic skills at the beginning of Year 7.

137. Attainment through the school is broadly the same as at the last inspection. Pupils presently in Years 7 to 9 are achieving well in lessons. In a library lesson, a lower attaining Year 9 class made good progress in learning about the major rivers of the world from textbooks, atlases and CD-ROMS. A higher attaining group firmly grasped the formation of a meander and used technical language to explain why a river erodes its banks when it flows fast and deposits material when it slows down. The requirement for each boy to sit beside a girl sustains boys' achievement in the lower school. Pupils make good progress considering that their attainment was below average on entry to the school.

138. By age 14, attainment is broadly at the standard expected. Pupils have good knowledge of geographical facts. For example, they can describe and explain features of rivers and river basins. They need more practice, however, at using what they know and understand to answer questions and solve problems. Higher attaining Year 7 pupils did this well when they quickly revised then extended their map reading skills. Pupils were well challenged in a lively activity around an ordnance survey map when applying their knowledge, understanding and skills to an imaginary race. There was laughter and learning was fun.

139. Attainment at GCSE has improved over the last three years. In 2001, GCSE results were in line with the national average for the proportion achieving A*-C grades. Nevertheless, the numbers who choose to study geography at GCSE are well below the national average, reflecting the wide range of alternative choices. Twice as many boys as girls opt for the subject, and boys perform better than girls. Standards in coursework are high but a little lower in written papers. Nevertheless, these pupils achieved well when their attainment on entry to the course is compared with their GCSE results in 2001.

140. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is average but pupils make good progress across the two years, particularly where they are engaged in tasks that allow them to work at their own level and pace. For example, in a very good lesson on the environmental effects of the destruction of the rain forest, pupils were challenged well to apply their very good prior knowledge, some drawn from lessons in biology. They speculated about the consequences

to Brazil and to the planet of the unconsidered destruction of the rain forests. This resulted in good standards of attainment, and pupils achieved well in developing their own understanding of environmental effects. In a minority of lessons, however, all move at the same pace so that some pupils are passive. Whilst achievement then is satisfactory, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, particularly higher attainers.

141. Teaching is good overall. It is good or better in three-quarters of lessons, and satisfactory in the rest. Teaching is very good in almost one lesson in five and good in almost three lessons in five. It is slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.

142. The majority of teachers have secure subject knowledge, which helps pupils develop their own skills, knowledge and understanding. However, not enough fieldwork is planned for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to enable them to practise the skills they have learned. This inhibits the attainment of lower attaining pupils in particular in their GCSE course work. Two non-specialist teachers are well deployed in the lower school to make best use of their abilities so that their lack of subject expertise does not have adverse effects upon the quality of learning.

143. Teachers have very good expectations of their pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils are managed well through a sharp, positive focus on teaching and learning. Relationships are very good and contribute significantly to learning. In their anxiety to ensure that pupils learn everything, teachers sometimes control the flow of information too firmly. Although in the school at large pupils are trusted to develop as individuals, they do not develop quite so well as independent learners because they are not yet always trusted with their own learning. When they are so trusted, pupils in Years 8 and 9 produce well-researched reports on a number of topics. Occasionally, work does not help pupils reach the higher levels in Year 9, often because teachers do not consistently ask suitably challenging questions.

144. Lessons are usually packed with work. Time is well used and time targets are set so that the pace of learning is quick. Nevertheless, not all lessons have a final review to consolidate learning and point pupils to the next lesson. Pupils know the aim of each lesson so that they know what they must do. Teachers use vivid video clips well to illustrate their lessons so that pupils' learning is stimulated. Pupils retain good information recorded in 'brainstorm' diagrams and 'mind maps', for example, in a lesson on the rain forest ecosystem and in another on the consequences of the clearing of the forests.

145. Teachers mark work thoroughly. Their comments are supportive, but they do not always show pupils how to improve. Record books are efficiently kept. Pupils on the GCSE course know their target grades, which are increasingly accurate and challenging, but they do not always know what they need to do to improve. They talk about revising harder, but not about learning better. There is insufficiently sharp focus on the detail of examination technique that would provide targets for further improvement. Though teachers' professional instincts about attainment are good, they lack confidence in the measurement of attainment using the level descriptions of the National Curriculum. Consequently they tend to over-estimate performance in those terms. They have not sufficiently observed good practice elsewhere.

146. The teaching of basic skills through geography has had mixed success. Teachers have worked hard on the implementation of a literacy policy, but it is not yet monitored by the literacy co-ordinator, and geographical learning and literacy skills do not quite develop together. Reading round the class is a fairly regular feature of lessons, and key words and meanings are recorded in every lesson. Pupils write in a wide range of style. It is mostly in the form of reports, but they also write imaginatively, for example, about crossing a desert at night, letters to the Prime Minister of Japan about whaling quotas, and newspaper reports about the Mount St. Helen eruption. They also write poetry about the moods of the weather. Pupils listen well and, when they are given the opportunity to speculate or explain, they speak well to link cause and effect. For example, a lower attaining Year 9 boy could explain exactly

why a waterfall gradually moves upstream. However, the style of closed questioning mostly used by teachers invites short answers.

147. Teachers employ number skills in most lessons, and awareness is raised by the implementation of a policy for numeracy. Skills are well applied in course work at GCSE, where the best pupils employ statistical methods, such as Spearman's Rank, to analyse data they have collected from questionnaires they have designed themselves.

148. Pupils with particular learning needs are identified. This includes the gifted or talented and those with statements of special needs. Good support is given to these pupils when it is available, and to some other pupils who have particular learning difficulties.

149. There is a shortage of computers and computer rooms so that access to those available is limited. The location of the power point for the one computer in the department makes its use difficult. Consequently, the department does not meet its statutory obligation to teach part of its work through the medium of ICT. The department does well to set varied homework, which includes the regular use of different ICT skills, and there is good evidence of this in pupils' work. Teachers could do more to indicate useful web sites to help pupils extend their learning at home. Teachers are aware of those pupils who do not have their own computers at home, and the librarian helps these pupils to have first access to the computers in the library.

150. The head of department works part-time but has secured steady improvement in a number of directions since the last inspection, despite difficulty. The subject is managed well. However, the detailed breakdown of examination marks and examination criteria is not scrutinised in enough detail to provide teaching and learning targets. Accommodation is unsatisfactory; the shortage of space means that four teachers share one specialist room. They teach in between three and five other rooms each, often at a distance from the base so that resources have to be carried, causing additional wear and tear. Sometimes resources like the video player have to be used out of sequence because there is not a player available in the room allocated. This happened in a lesson on rivers, when a teacher had to use a video as a means of revision of waterfalls so that the pupils could see it when the main part of the lesson was about meanders. The specialist geography room is too small for the larger classes. Storage is limited and the room consequently cluttered. It is otherwise well equipped. Nevertheless, there are not enough up-to-date books for each pupil to have a copy, and this leads to inefficient over-spending on photocopying.

HISTORY

151. In history the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- Attitudes and behaviour in lessons.
- Consistently good results at GCSE.

Areas for development:

- Implement planned provision for ICT in Years 7-9 and extend planning into Years 10-11.
- Broaden the range of teaching and learning styles at GCSE Level to increase the opportunities for independent learning.
- Further develop the interrogation and evaluation of sources in Years 7-9.

152. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9, as measured by teacher assessments, has risen over the past three years. In 2001, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was substantially above the national average by some 20 percentage points, with

significantly less difference between the performance of boys and girls than is the case nationally.

153. At GCSE, overall attainment has been consistently well above average over the past four years. There has been some variation in the attainment of boys and girls. For example, boys outperformed girls in 2000, and almost 90 per cent of them gained grades in the A*-C range. In 2001, the overall attainment of boys was almost exactly in line with that of girls. These results reflect very good achievement as pupils came into the school with below average levels of attainment. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

154. By the end of Year 9, present pupils have made good progress to acquire a sound and often very detailed knowledge of the designated areas of study. They select, interpret and deploy sources skilfully to support a line of argument, although lower attaining pupils are not always sufficiently critical in their evaluation of those sources. Pupils complete a good quantity of well-presented and technically accurate written work, and use appropriate subject specific terminology effectively in extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress, as for example in a Year 8 lesson on the French Revolution, when a pupil quite clearly explained the difference between the Estates General and the National Assembly. In Year 9 work on the extension of the franchise, pupils of all ability levels demonstrated good understanding of the attitudes of those pressing for reform, and clearly explained the differing rationales and tactics of the Suffragists and Suffragettes. In another Year 9 lesson on Northern Ireland, pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge of the diverse factions amongst the republican and loyalist communities.

155. By the end of Year 11, pupils of all ability levels achieve well to reach standards that are above and often well above the average. Work is highly structured, which has the benefit of enabling pupils to make comprehensive and detailed notes that establish a secure basis for examination success. The disadvantage of this approach is that pupils' independence in learning is sometimes undermined. Although there are some weaknesses in spelling, as in earlier years, pupils demonstrate high standards of literacy overall. In a lesson on Communism, most pupils could recall details of early Bolshevik decrees and of their repressive measures, and all produced well presented analyses of how effective the policy was in meeting its aims. Pupils understand material well because teachers explain clearly in accessible language, as in a Year 11 lesson when the teacher described sailors as 'season ticket holders of the October Revolution'. Pupils' recall is also good because teachers use mnemonics.

156. Pupils respond very positively to the opportunities offered. They concentrate well and listen closely to their teachers and each other in lessons. They offer confident oral contributions willingly in class and give every appearance of enjoying their work. Behaviour in history lessons is never less than good and overall it is very good. Close and mutually respectful relationships between teachers and pupils allow the latter to make good use of humour and anecdote in consolidating pupils' learning.

157. Teaching is always good and much of it is very good. Teachers have very detailed subject knowledge, which enables them to offer clear explanations resulting in good learning. They make very effective use of question and answer to explore, challenge and extend pupils' understanding. Teachers have high expectations and manage classes adeptly so that their pupils learn well. Lessons are well planned and structured, and objectives are shared with pupils at the outset. Towards the end of lessons, teachers recap well to consolidate gains in knowledge. A lot of effort has gone into improving literacy standards, including the display of comprehensive lists of key words, checking pupils' understanding of new terms, and reading aloud. Although opportunities for the acquisition of ICT skills are built into the schemes of work, problems over access to computers are currently restricting progress in this area. Opportunities to involve pupils more actively in their own learning are sometimes missed, as set questions sometimes invite largely descriptive or 'closed' answers, and therefore do not

always challenge pupils to explore and evaluate as much as they might. Teachers mark books regularly, using national curriculum Levels, and include helpful diagnostic comment so that pupils can easily identify where improvement is possible and desirable. They make good use of data to set challenging attainment targets and offer pupils support in meeting them.

158. The subject is well managed and led. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject's development and has worked hard to raise its profile in the school. There are good collaborative relationships amongst teachers, which helped to maintain the good learning of classes affected by the recent maternity leave of one teacher. Departmental documents are clear, comprehensive and up to date; they support standards well through features such as explicit areas of responsibility and detailed schemes of work. The department has successfully addressed many of the issues from the last report by raising attainment and progress, and improving the availability and quality of textbooks. Improvement since the last report has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

159. Overall the quality of provision is unsatisfactory.

Strengths:

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils to be able to work independently.
- GNVQ course in ICT has been introduced this year for pupils in Year 10.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils.
- Pupils are very interested in the subject and behave very well in lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- More time is needed in Years 7, 8 and 9 to meet fully National Curriculum requirements.
- All pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their ICT entitlement.
- Better use of National Curriculum attainment levels in Years 7, 8 and 9 to help pupils to set their own targets for improvement.
- More resources such as data projectors and interactive white boards to further develop teaching.
- More planned use of ICT in other subjects.

160. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were well below national levels, although this was an improvement on the previous year, which was the first year of the course. Teachers' assessments of pupils aged 14 in 2001 indicate that pupils are working below the levels expected for their age.

161. The standards of work seen during the inspection by pupils at the age of 14 are below the expected level. Pupils in Year 7 can log on to the network. They have basic word processing skills and a satisfactory understanding of how to set out business and personal letters. They have satisfactory keyboard skills for their age. Pupils in Year 8 understand what is meant by a database and a data capture sheet. The majority of pupils are able to produce a data capture sheet by making use of word processing skills. In Year 9, pupils show understanding of spreadsheets and the concept of formulae, but do not yet make more advanced use of spreadsheets for predictions. Indeed, some pupils are working below the level expected for their age, as they have already covered basic spreadsheets in Years 7 and 8.

162. Pupils taking GNVQ and GCSE courses are working at the levels expected for their age and in line with national expectations. Other pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working below expected levels, and overall standards are below average. Year 10 pupils following the GNVQ ICT course make use of a variety of skills learned in previous years. They show

confidence in importing images from clip art for use in desktop publishing and word processing. In preparation for examinations next term, they have produced logos, flyers, and business letters. Higher attainers show more understanding of the importance of appropriate presentation for a specified audience in developing fliers, making good use of text, colour and appropriate logos. In Year 11, pupils make good use of a range of computer skills in their GCSE ICT course. Higher attainers have a good understanding of spreadsheets and can use complex formulae.

163. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic about the subject. They stay focussed on tasks set, can work independently when given the opportunity and also co-operate well when working in pairs. Pupils are responsive in question and answer sessions. They are well behaved in lessons and respond well to teachers. Pupils have good relationships with teachers and with each other. They respond well to teachers' instructions, which contributes to their learning.

164. Teaching is satisfactory. Some teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations, which help pupils learn. Lesson planning is satisfactory, with good use of prepared work sheets that allow pupils of different attainment levels to work at their own rate. Teachers have high expectations of pupils being able to work independently. Objectives are sometimes shared with pupils at the start of lessons, which helps them understand what is expected of them, and teachers occasionally recap at the end of lessons to help consolidate learning. Such approaches are not used frequently or consistently enough to increase the impact of teaching. In lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 no use is made of National Curriculum Levels to help set targets for pupils' development. Teachers do not have the use of new technology, such as data projectors and interactive white boards. Such devices are effective in helping pupils understand processes because they are clearly displayed.

165. In all lessons, pupils make some progress as they learn new skills and reinforce existing ones. For instance, pupils in Year 7 build on their basic skills in word processing and extend their knowledge and understanding of computer applications such as databases, spreadsheets, and desktop publishing. Pupils in the GNVQ ICT course in Year 10 and in the GCSE course in Year 11 make good progress as they use a wide range of skills to complete their course work and prepare for the examination. Although pupils in Years 8 and 9 make sound progress in the lessons observed, they have made less progress than might be expected over the term. This is as a result of the reduced amount of time for the subject and the shortening of units of work, which is a major factor contributing to their underachievement. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 who take examination courses is satisfactory. Nevertheless, those pupils in these years who are not taught ICT are underachieving, and this is well over half of each year group.

166. Management of the department is unsatisfactory, although much work has been done to install new computers, establish a better network, and introduce a GNVQ course. Schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9 do not match the requirements of the National Curriculum. Many teachers take ICT lessons, but this teaching is not monitored, nor is there any co-ordination and standardisation of the assessment of pupils' capabilities in the subject. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not take examination courses have very little ICT, apart from some word processing to produce their record of achievement files. Pupils not taking an examination course do not receive their entitlement in the subject, and this is well over half of all pupils in these years. Although computers have been installed in

departments, limited use is made of them. Little use is made of ICT in teaching other subjects, and no records are made of what ICT skills pupils are developing in other subjects. However, teachers are at present undergoing ICT training under the New Opportunities Fund, and about a third have now completed this training.

167. Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection, as standards continue to be below expected levels and there is underachievement. Pupils continue to show interest and enthusiasm for the subject and relationships are good. The ICT curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements. The use of ICT in other subjects remains an issue, as not all departments have planned use of ICT in their schemes of work and access to computers and computer equipment is limited.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

168. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is satisfactory.

Strengths:

- Effective monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Teaching at least satisfactory and often good.
- Assessment procedures are good.

Areas for improvement:

- Use of time.
- Provision of coursebooks for all pupils.
- Use of ICT.
- Links with France and Spain.

French

169. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' written work show that, after their first three years in school, pupils reach average standards in French at the end of Year 9. This confirms the formal assessments made by teachers in the summer of 2001. After three years of year-on-year improvement, GCSE results in 2000 dipped to well below average. In 2001 they dipped further, mainly because of staffing difficulties. The attainment of boys in particular was very low. Standards seen in Year 11 are still below average, but these pupils are making satisfactory progress compared with their standards on entry.

170. Pupils' achievement both in Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory, reflecting the satisfactory standard of teaching overall. There is no tail of low achievement linked to low attainment, as is sometimes seen. Pupils with special needs are well understood and supported in lessons so that they make progress closely matching that of others in their group. A small minority does not take a foreign language course, but otherwise the National Curriculum aspiration of a foreign language for all has been successfully implemented. Overall, pupils' literacy skills are sound. Pupils write and spell with reasonable accuracy, they read competently but speaking is more hesitant.

171. All teaching is at least satisfactory, and good teaching was seen in several lessons. Teachers are competent linguists and have improved their use of the foreign language in lessons since the previous inspection. They assess pupils' work carefully, both in routine exercises and in formal assessments, so that they and the pupils concerned know what must be done to improve. Speaking, however, can only be assessed in class because there is no suitable room for speaking tests. Teachers are aware of the needs of gifted and talented pupils and provide extension work where appropriate. Teachers manage their pupils well, and pupils' attitudes are good and sometimes very good. In general, pupils react

positively to language learning and appreciate the fact that, after three years' work in both French and Spanish, they now have a choice of language as they enter Year 10. Learning is well balanced, including all four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Of these, reading offers scope for development at this time. The faculty understands the need for pupils to have proper course books so that they can learn independently, but so far this has not been possible for all classes for financial reasons. Also, the expectation that pupils further develop skills in the use of ICT is not being satisfactorily met.

172. Leadership and management in the faculty is satisfactory overall. The department was successful in raising attainment in the period immediately following the last report. After a recent fall in standards brought about by staffing difficulties, the department has once more focused clearly on securing an improvement, with encouraging results. To this end, monitoring of teaching and learning has been sharpened up as part of a whole school policy, and there are clear procedures for the assessment of pupils' work and the maintenance of records accessible to all teachers. The faculty makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, though culturally there is the shortcoming that there are no long-term links with France or Spain.

173. Issues surrounding pupils with special needs are satisfactorily addressed, with the co-operation of others who have expertise in this area. ICT now needs to be tackled in the same way. As part of a whole school issue of time management, the faculty needs to ensure that time is used to best effect by planning sufficient and sufficiently varied activities to make best use of the time available. The present allocation of one lesson per week disadvantages pupils' learning because it lacks continuity and is not properly consolidated.

Spanish

174. Standards in Spanish are below average at the end of Year 9, principally because of once-a-week lessons in Year 8. All pupils take this second foreign language, and this is good curricular provision. However, it would be very good if time were better distributed. Low attaining pupils in particular need to hear the language frequently to retain its features securely. Standards in Years 10 and 11 reflect the different composition of the teaching groups: standards in Year 11 are above average because there is only one group and they are high attaining, whereas in Year 10 standards are average because there are high, middle and low attaining groups. Standards were above average in the GCSE examination, which was taken for the first time in 2001 by one group of some 15 pupils. Given the relatively short time available for Spanish, pupils' achievement is good, both in Year 9 and Year 11.

175. Teaching is at least good, and in one lesson seen it was very good. Spanish is used as far as possible in lessons. Good planning, which provides a succession of varied activities, keeps pupils under pressure to make progress so that no time is wasted. Literacy skills are well taught and are linked together in such a way that they reinforce each other and pupils learn well. Good use is made of visual cues presented on the overhead projector. Expectations both of pupils and of teachers are high, and pupil response, morale and motivation are good. All this leads to good learning. Where pupils with special needs are involved, as for example in a low attaining set in Year 10, they make similar progress to other pupils.

176. Constraints arising from timetable, accommodation, and resources affect Spanish in the same way as they affect French. As in French, there is insufficient use of ICT.

MUSIC

177. The overall quality of provision for music is good.

Strengths:

- Very good teaching enables pupils to make good progress, leading to good standards of attainment across Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Provision is made for pupils of all ability to make good progress across the school.
- Boys and girls are equally attracted to study music courses in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement:

- Standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11.
- Further resources and strategies for further development of ICT.

178. The most recent Year 9 assessments showed standards to be above average overall, with more pupils reaching standards that are well above average than generally found. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In the most recent GCSE examinations, results were below the national average, as they were in the previous year and are broadly the same as at the last inspection. These results were disappointing for the department, but reasons have been identified and strategies for improvement have been put into place. The department is targeting Year 11 pupils' listening skills in order to raise the achievement, so that, for instance, those in line to achieve a D grade aim for at least one grade higher. Year 10 pupils are being prepared for an examination offered by a different examination board, that puts more emphasis upon practical musicianship.

179. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above average. The majority of pupils come to the school with a secure knowledge of musical literacy, and, for many of them, a good training in singing technique. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the elements of music. They understand how to recognise and create major and minor chords, and how to improvise and compose melodies on keyboards, using the pentatonic scale. Performances observed in Year 9 included melodic improvisations based on sequences of six different chords. Pupils have a good knowledge of musical form such as binary and variation form. Most pupils in a Year 9 class, for example, can successfully play a theme on a keyboard in a major key, vary it with added notes, invert it, convert it into the minor, transpose it into the dominant key, and improvise with it. Talented pupils who receive individual lessons on instruments are expected to use them in class ensemble. This is excellent practice as it raises the achievement of the players, and gives an added dimension to the quality of ensemble work. A cornet player and a guitarist in Year 8, for example, successfully performed in one lesson. The quality of singing in the school is good: it is natural, unaffected, and very pleasant to listen to.

180. By the end of Year 11, pupils have above average standards of attainment, with some of them having well above average standards of practical performance. The department is aware that the listening analysis skills of middle ability pupils need to be improved, but during the course of the inspection, all eight boys in Year 11 made a very accurate aural analysis of Vivaldi's 'Spring' from 'The Four Seasons.' Pupils in Years 10 and 11 use their ears well, and have a strong perception of harmonic progression when undertaking group improvisation. Year 11 pupils, for example, gave a creditable performance of improvisation upon a chord sequence, using three major and three minor chords in one lesson. Year 10 pupils successfully used the information they had gained through practical ensemble playing in order to analyse a baroque rondo.

181. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are carefully prepared, with helpful, open-ended worksheets to enable pupils of all ability to make good progress. Appropriate music is selected for pupils to work with. The emphasis, from Years 7 to 11, is upon pupils learning through practical, hands-on projects, and this enables them to learn how

to perform and compose effectively. Teachers have a firm and friendly approach, often demonstrating a good sense of humour, and this encourages pupils to work hard. Teachers stress importance upon pupils enjoying their music making, but at the same time, extending themselves to improve their standards of attainment. Pupils display very good attitudes to music and clearly want to give of their best. They enjoy using the music technology, moving efficiently to set it up, and working effectively to improve their performance skills. They concentrate well during practical work. They display courtesy to each other while performances take place. Manuscript and written work is neatly presented. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 debate vigorously but politely, as exemplified by Year 11 pupils arguing whether or not a section of Vivaldi scoring was an ostinato.

182. Achievement in lessons is good across the school, and pupils make good progress, both within lessons and across modules of work. The practice of insisting upon regular performances of practical individual work through lessons, and whole-class ensemble performance at the end of lessons, keeps pupils in all years on target, and ensures that they steadily develop their skills. The provision of worksheets, giving open-ended tasks appropriate to pupils of all ability, ensures that all make sound progress. In classes observed in Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils with special needs made progress at least as good as, and, because of their diligence, sometimes better progress than some other pupils.

183. The music department is well led, and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Schemes of work have been completely rewritten. Assessment procedures have been thoroughly reviewed, and are prominently on display in the music room so that they are fully understood by the pupils. New keyboards have been acquired, though more are needed to ensure maximum progress by all pupils. A more extended use of computers is in the process of being developed. The use by visiting instrumental teachers of an adjacent practice room that is not thoroughly soundproofed creates learning problems in lessons where aural analysis is being undertaken. The department contributes positively to the ethos of the school through performances in masses, regular large-scale musicals, activities in the community and combined concerts with other schools in the area.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

184. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- In relation to levels of attainment on entry, pupils achieve well by ages 14 and 16.
- Standards at GCSE are improving, and this has a good impact on overall standards.
- Good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour contribute to a purposeful learning atmosphere and good progress in lessons by all pupils.
- Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Areas for development:

- Opportunities for pupils to be involved in evaluation during and at the end of lessons.
- Schemes of work to guide the work of the department.
- The amount of time allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 for those pupils who do not take the GCSE course.

185. In teachers' assessments in 2001, the proportion of pupils aged 14 obtaining Level 5 or above was in line with the national average. In work seen during the inspection, standards are average for pupils at the age of 14. In the course that all pupils take in Years 10 and 11, standards at age of 16 are above average overall, though the high standards of those pupils who follow the GCSE course have a positive impact on the overall standards. There are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls. On the whole, standards since the last inspection have been maintained.

186. By the age of 14, achievement is good for all groups of pupils in relation to their physical capabilities. In volleyball, for example, boys have a secure level of individual basic skills but these are less secure for some pupils when under pressure in games. In gymnastics, boys vault with confidence and the more capable are starting to develop higher levels of competence. All, however, still need to work on the quality of their starting and finish positions. Girls have a sound knowledge of the rules of hockey and secure basic skills and techniques; for example, most apply the block tackle effectively in drills. Some of the less capable are still not looking up sufficiently, thus their passing lacks accuracy in small-sided games. At age 16, achievement continues to be good. In trampoline lessons, for example, girls are developing the quality of their voluntary routines, with the more talented including swivel hips and somersaults in their sequences. In association football, the great majority of boys have good individual skills and apply them well in small-sided games. Their teamwork and tactical skills are developing well. For example, they successfully modify their approach to take account of the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing side.

187. Across Years 7 to 11, pupils have a secure grasp of the principles and procedures of preparing for physical activity. Pupils suggest appropriate stretches, and name the muscle groups being used in warm-up. They sometimes take responsibility for leading their own warm-up sequences. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and integrated so that they make good progress. Physically talented pupils achieve well in lessons and are provided with further opportunities through recreational extra-curricular activities or school teams.

188. GCSE physical education is an optional subject taken by some pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving higher grade passes fell after the last inspection, but standards are now improving once again. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grade passes was in line with the national average. Comparisons between boys and girls are not viable because of the small numbers of girls taking the course. A scrutiny of a sample of their theory books shows that Year 10 pupils have made a good start to the course. The work set, for example, is well matched to the full ability range of the pupils, including extension work for the more able. Year 11 pupils have been well prepared for the project work they have to complete as part of the course. All are using computers well to present their project work. In their practical lessons in basketball, Year 11 pupils are consolidating their shooting skills as well as their overall team play. The good practical standards of pupils on the GCSE course are having a positive impact on the standards of other pupils in Years 10 and 11.

189. The quality of teaching is good in all years and results in effective learning for all pupils, so that good progress is being made by all. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and the overall quality has improved since the last inspection. All lessons start promptly and efficiently, which results in pupils being involved quickly. Teachers have high expectations in terms of discipline, behaviour and the ability of pupils to work to their best. They manage their classes well. Pupils' response to this is good, which helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons and enables all to make good progress. For example, they work well in pairs and small groups, showing clear respect for the capabilities of one another. In a Year 7 rugby union lesson, for example, boys worked well together as pairs and small groups to develop their passing skills. In all lessons, pupils are told the learning objectives and given clear instructions, together with an effective breakdown and demonstration of required skills. Such an approach ensures that all pupils are aware of what is expected of them and what they have to do to make progress. This is indicative of teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the activities being taught, and shows pupils how to adapt, refine and improve their own practice. In a Year 7 girls' volleyball lesson, for example, this was a significant factor in helping the pupils make such good progress.

190. A good variety of structured activities in lessons helps ensure pupils stay motivated as well as providing progression and challenge. In a Year 9 girls' hockey lesson, for example,

teachers developed pupils' confidence in tackling through a series of activities prior to a game. However, in these games tackling techniques were not stressed enough and no method was used to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' skills. In a Year 11 boys' football lesson, pupils were challenged by being asked to organise their team tactics in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing team. Effective questioning by teachers enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills and ensures they understand the terminology being used, though more use could be made of displays of key words and terminology. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities because teachers move round groups offering praise and constructive criticism. In most lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to be involved in evaluation by observing and coaching one another, thus they have full opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding. In a Year 11 GCSE basketball lesson, though, the teacher involved two talented pupils very well by having them coach the shooting skills of the less physically capable. There is a tendency for the teacher to take the lead in evaluating progress at the end of lessons without also asking pupils for their responses as to what they feel they have achieved. GCSE theory work is marked consistently, but the comments from teachers are not specific enough to help pupils make further progress. Occasionally, the few non-participants are not as fully involved as they should be, for example, as part of whole group introductions or in coaching and evaluation roles.

191. There is effective leadership and management, with an appropriate focus on raising standards and the quality of provision. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been sound. Good quality improvement planning guides the work of the department, and effective use of ICT is being developed to assist in administration. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has been extended at Key Stage 4 by the introduction of a GCSE physical education course. However, in Years 7 to 9, boys and girls do not follow the same range of activities; girls follow dance whereas boys follow orienteering. In Years 10 and 11, curriculum time is low for those pupils who follow the common course. This means that the pupils who are not following the GCSE course are not achieving the standards they are capable of. The new schemes of work that have been produced to reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum have not yet been fully adapted to guide the work of the department.

192. The overall range and quality of accommodation is adequate, but the quality of the gymnasium means that standards of basketball are not as high as they could be. Shower arrangements do not provide the privacy expected by boys because there are no cubicles, and this has a negative impact on standards of personal hygiene and does little for pupils' self esteem. A good range of extra-curricular provision extends opportunities for pupils. These include recreational activities and inter-form competitions as well as inter-school competitive fixtures. As a result of the enthusiasm of teachers, some of who are from other departments, individual pupils and boys and girls teams have achieved representative honours at district, regional and national level in volleyball. The under-14 girls' netball and the under-12 boys 5-a-side teams are also successful.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

193. Overall, the quality of provision is good.

Strengths:

- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good.

Areas for development:

- The use of assessment information to help plan future lessons.

Child Development (Health and Social Care GNVQ)

194. This is a new course and pupils have not taken examinations in it before.

195. Pupils take part in a number of projects in Years 10 and 11. They produce work of a good standard that includes research and observational studies. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work and show pride in the quality of their project work. They are keen to discuss their work and do so with confidence. They enjoy the work, which provides stimulus and challenge, and endeavour to succeed through patience and determination. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are always good. Pupils show an interest in their work and maintain good levels of concentration to work to their best standards. They take responsibility for organising their tasks and there is much independent work.

196. Teaching is good. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject, and careful planning ensures that lessons have a suitable pace. Careful attention is paid to the sequence of activities, which contributes to the good pace of lessons. Practical activities are well organised and the supervision of lessons is effective, with appropriate interventions to support and sustain individual pupils' learning and maintain appropriate expectations. The teacher's expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour are high, and consequently pupils learn well. Work is well matched to the needs of pupils. Work is marked regularly and the teacher gives helpful oral and written comments. Assessment information is used well to monitor pupils' work, but is not always used to inform planning and the teaching of subsequent lessons. Homework is set to reinforce the content of lessons.