

INSPECTION REPORT

CROFTON HIGH SCHOOL

Crofton, Wakefield

LEA area: Wakefield

Unique reference number: 108281

Headteacher: Mr J M Myers

Reporting inspector: Christine Harrison

4145

Dates of inspection: 11th – 14th March 2002

Inspection number: 243725

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Street Crofton Wakefield West Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G P Jackson OBE BEM JP
Date of previous inspection:	19 th May 1997

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4145	C. Harrison	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13786	S. Walsh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
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4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Design and technology	
27803	J. Clark	Team inspector	Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs Equality of opportunity The work of the special educational needs unit	
19026	B. Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31981	E. Forster	Team inspector	Art and design	
20716	R. Grogan	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2793	R. Maden	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business studies	
23246	J. Mitchell	Team inspector	Science	
12336	J. M. R. Overend	Team inspector	Geography	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Crofton High School is a mixed comprehensive school educating 1105 pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. The school is larger than the average secondary school. There are 45 more girls than boys in the school. The number of pupils has risen significantly since the previous inspection, when there were 832 on roll. The standard number of pupils admitted is now 216 but this has been exceeded in most year groups. The school takes pupils from 22 schools across a wide area in and around Wakefield, in addition to pupils from the four former mining villages that provided its original catchment area. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds but, overall, the socio-economic circumstances of pupils are around the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 11.9 per cent, which is close to the average for all schools nationally. The school population is mainly white, reflecting the situation in the local area, and there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment but, overall, their attainment when they begin Year 7 is average. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register, and the proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational need, are both around the national average. The school has a visually impaired unit, providing support for 11 pupils with varying degrees of visual impairment who come from across the whole Wakefield area. The school is involved in the pilot scheme for the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Crofton High School provides a sound education for its pupils. Pupils gain GCSE results that match the national average. Overall, pupils achieve as well as might be expected in relation to their attainment when they enter the school and lower attainers do particularly well. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and pupils benefit from the very good care and support provided by the school. The school is well led and has been carefully managed through a period of rapid growth and financial constraints. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' attainment at the age of 16 is above the national average in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and music.
- Almost all pupils gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to G. This indicates that lower attaining pupils do very well in relation to their attainment when they enter the school.
- The school provides very good care and effective support for individual pupils.
- The work of the visually impaired unit is outstanding. It enables its pupils to participate fully in the life of the school and to make progress in lessons at the same rate as their friends.
- The headteacher and leadership team provide good leadership. They are working effectively with heads of department to raise pupils' attainment.

What could be improved

- The achievement of middle and higher attaining pupils, although satisfactory, is not as good as that of lower attaining pupils. Boys do not achieve as well as girls in several subjects.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should by the end of Year 11 in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average.
- The unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils, mostly boys, disrupts learning in some lessons.
- The school does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the school community.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection in May 1997. Attainment at the end of Year 9 remains broadly the same in relation to the national average. GCSE results followed the national trend until 2001, when they fell. Inspection evidence indicates that the school is working hard to overcome the problems identified in 2001 and that current standards are closer to those of previous years. In comparison with the previous inspection, the proportion of lessons graded good or better has increased and the number of unsatisfactory lessons has fallen. The school has made good progress in its efforts to overcome the weaknesses identified in the previous report. In particular, pupils' writing skills have improved and now match their standards in other aspects of literacy. Good progress has been made in establishing ICT as a genuine subject within the school's curriculum. However, much work remains to be done in relation to planning, resources and accommodation for ICT and it remains a key issue for the school.

STANDARDS

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

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

Standards at the end of Year 9 are average and pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their attainment when they enter the school in Year 7. In the 2001 National tests for 14 year olds, results in English, mathematics and science all matched the national average and, overall, the results were also average compared with those for similar schools. Girls did better than boys in English and science and, in English, the gap between girls' and boys' attainment was bigger than that found nationally. Girls and boys gained similar results in mathematics. The school's results in these tests have followed the national trend over the last four years.

In the 2001 GCSE examinations, results were average in comparison with all schools nationally but below average compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. However, the results were average when compared with those for schools having similar test results at the age of 14. Overall, therefore, pupils achieved satisfactory results in relation to their test scores at the age of 11 and 14. Nevertheless, there were important differences between the results of pupils of different levels of attainment. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to G was very high compared with the national average, showing that lower attainers achieved very well. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C was average, showing satisfactory achievement, but clearly these middle and higher attaining pupils did not do as well, in relation to their earlier attainment, as lower attainers. Girls did better than boys in these examinations, reflecting the national pattern. In individual subjects, most results were around the national average. Results were slightly above average in mathematics and art and design but below average in English, geography, history, physical education and well below average in drama. GCSE results followed the national trend between 1997 and 2000 but dropped in 2001 because of a fall in the attainment of higher attaining pupils.

Standards seen during the inspection are average overall in Years 9 and 11. Standards in Year 9 are now above average in mathematics, art and design and religious education. They

are average in all other subjects. A similar pattern is found in Year 11 except that design and technology and music join the list of subjects where attainment is above average, standards in religious education are average and those in English and ICT are below average. In English, standards are improving steadily as recent staffing problems have been overcome. However, the attainment of the current Year 11 is still affected by weaknesses in their earlier experience. The school sets itself challenging targets for GCSE results. It did not achieve its targets in 2001, except those for grades A* to G. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are better than those indicated by the 2001 examination results. However, the school will find it difficult to meet the 2002 target of 52 per cent of pupils gaining grades A* to C.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils have at least satisfactory and often good, attitudes to their work. However, a small number of pupils have casual attitudes, sometimes arriving late to school and without the basic equipment they need.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The majority of pupils behave appropriately in the classroom and often, when teaching is particularly skilful, pupils' behaviour is good. However, there is a small but significant number of pupils, mostly boys, who occasionally disrupt the learning of other pupils. Behaviour around the school is usually satisfactory.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils develop more mature attitudes as they grow older but there are not enough opportunities for them to take on responsibility and develop and use their initiative. Relationships within the school are generally good and pupils are happy to ask staff for help when necessary.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below the national average in Years 10 and 11 and this affects pupils' learning and their eventual GCSE results.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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 and learning are good in mathematics and satisfactory in English and science. In other subjects, teaching is good in art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects. The most significant strengths in teaching are teachers' good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Teachers usually provide a good variety of activity to hold pupils' concentration and ensure that they make satisfactory gains in knowledge, understanding and skills during the lesson. In the few lessons when teaching is unsatisfactory, the problem often lies with the teacher's difficulty in managing the challenging behaviour of a few pupils.

In many lessons that are broadly satisfactory, there are, nevertheless, particular weaknesses, which, although minor in a particular lesson or an individual subject, have a more significant impact on pupils' progress over time and their eventual achievement. Most importantly, teachers often plan appropriately for the majority of pupils in a class, but do not provide activities and resources that fully meet the needs of the highest and lowest attainers. The lowest attainers and pupils with special educational needs often, though not always, benefit from additional support to overcome their difficulties and to succeed with the tasks set. However, in these circumstances, higher attainers, including those who are gifted and talented, do not learn as quickly as they might.

The skills of literacy are well taught, with several subjects, particularly history, making strong contributions to developing pupils' skills, particularly their writing. Teachers in science, design and technology and geography encourage pupils to use their number skills but there is not yet any overall planning to ensure that pupils have sufficient planned opportunities to practise and improve their numeracy skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but some classes in Years 10 and 11 are too large. Careers education and the arrangements for developing literacy skills are both good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Where appropriate, pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from the valuable 'catch up' programme and some individual teaching. In-class support is sensitive and effective. There are limited modifications to the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to meet their particular needs. Visually impaired pupils receive excellent support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The school's provision is largely unplanned and many opportunities that occur in the curriculum are missed. The school provides encouragement to pupils to relate successfully to other people but not enough opportunities for them to take responsibility. The school helps pupils develop moral values and makes a satisfactory contribution to widening their cultural horizons. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care for individual pupils, particularly those who are experiencing difficulties, is very good. The arrangements for assessment and for monitoring progress are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring attendance and for promoting good behaviour are unsatisfactory.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. Parents are generally supportive and appreciative of the work of the school. There is a shortage of news and information for parents and pupils' reports do not give parents enough information on pupils' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has clear principles which guide the school's work. He is ably supported by the range of skills provided by others in the leadership team. There was a determined response to the 'dip' in results in 2001 but the school has not yet been fully successful in establishing the 'achievement culture' for which it strives.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors, particularly the chairman, are very supportive of the school and work hard on its behalf. They fulfil almost all their statutory responsibilities for the school but there is not a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and pupils in the current Year 11 have not received their full entitlement to ICT.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There are good systems for reviewing the work of departments. The resulting action has produced significant improvements in standards in several subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Specific grants have generally been well used but the school has not yet taken advantage of the additional funding for ICT training. The school applies the principles of 'best value' well, particularly in ensuring that funds are used effectively.

The school generally has sufficient, well qualified and experienced teachers and support staff, apart from a shortage of technical support in ICT, food and textiles. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and the school has good accommodation. However, there are weaknesses in both resources and accommodation for ICT. The school library, jointly funded with the local library service, provides a very good service for pupils and staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school expects pupils to try hard and do their best. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if there is a problem. Pupils make good progress in school. The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents have various concerns about homework. They feel they are not always well informed about how their child is getting on. Some parents are concerned about behaviour in the school.

The inspection team broadly agrees with the positive views of parents, although inspectors would describe pupils' progress as satisfactory rather than good. The inspection team judges that the school makes broadly satisfactory use of homework but there is scope for improvement. Pupils' planners show some considerable variations in the amount of homework that is set and a few homework tasks that are not sufficiently demanding. Inspectors agree with these parents' views on the information they receive, particularly in pupils' reports, and they share the concern about behaviour in a few lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Standards in tests and examinations

National tests at the end of Year 9

1. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds in 2001 were in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with schools that take pupils from similar backgrounds, the results were average overall; they were average in English and mathematics but below average in science. Girls did better than boys in English and science and, in English, the gap between girls' and boys' attainment was bigger than that found nationally. However, there was little difference between boys' and girls' results in mathematics. Pupils did better at the higher levels, 6 and above, in English where the results at those levels were above the national average. Over the last five years, the school's overall results in these tests have broadly followed the national trend. Results in English and mathematics were better in 2001 than they had been at any time in the past five years. Results in science have fallen, in comparison with the national average, over five years. Test results at the age of 14 are similar, in relation to national results, to those at the time of the previous inspection.

GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11

2. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were average overall. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C was also average when compared with all schools nationally. However, almost all pupils gained five or more grades A* to G and this aspect of the results was well above the national average. In comparison with schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results overall, and for pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C, were both below average. However if these results are compared instead with schools where pupils' attainment was similar at the age of 11 or 14, the results were average. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to G was well above average, whether results are compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds or those where pupils gained similar results at the age of 14. Girls did better than boys in the 2001 examinations and the 'gap' in results between boys and girls is similar to that found nationally.

3. These results show that, taking the year group as a whole, pupils generally achieve satisfactory GCSE results in relation to their attainment in the tests at the end of Year 9. However, within this overall judgement there are clear differences in achievement between pupils of different levels attainment. Lower attainers achieve very well in this school. Higher attainers generally achieve satisfactorily but some of these pupils did not do as well as they should have done in 2001.

4. GCSE results in 2001 were around the national average in most subjects. However, results were slightly above the national average in mathematics and art and design. They were below the national average in English, history, geography, physical education and well below average in drama. Pupils gained their best results in mathematics, art and design and science. They did not do as well in English, drama and physical education as they did on average in their other subjects. Although almost all pupils who took music were successful in gaining grades A* to C, the numbers taking the subject were too small for a realistic comparison with national averages or with the average performance in subjects across the school. For the most part, the subjects in which pupils do best, or not as well, are the same for boys and girls. In subjects where girls do better than boys, the gap between the results often matches the difference between boys' and girls' results nationally. However, girls did

significantly better than boys in design and technology, geography, and French and in these subjects the gap between boys' and girls' attainment was bigger than that found nationally.

5. GCSE results followed the national trend between 1997 and 2000 but fell in 2001, largely because of a fall in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C; the results of lower attainers remained very good. The year group who took GCSE examinations in 2001 contained a significant number of pupils, many of them boys, who experienced problems outside school and some presented challenging behaviour in lessons. Another important factor affecting the examination results was pupils' attendance in Years 10 and 11 which was unsatisfactory and prevented some pupils from taking full advantage of the teaching provided. The school also experienced staffing difficulties, particularly in English and science, and had difficulty in finding suitable long-term supply teachers for some of those lessons. The resulting fall in 2001 GCSE results for middle and higher attaining pupils was a disappointment for the school and there was, and is, a strong collective determination on the part of staff to raise attainment in this and future years.

Standards in work seen during the inspection

6. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 are average overall and this represents satisfactory achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average in English and science and broadly reflect the results of the 2001 national tests. However, standards in mathematics have risen and are now above average. In other subjects, standards are generally in line with the levels expected at the end of Year 9 but there are two exceptions: standards are above average in art and design and religious education.

7. In the work seen during the inspection, attainment is around the level expected nationally by the end of Year 11 in most subjects. Although there are indications that middle and higher attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, could do better and could reach higher standards than they do at present, nevertheless, their achievement is generally at least satisfactory and there are few signs of the under-achievement that occurred among a minority of pupils in last year's examinations.

8. Within the overall situation, in which pupils are reaching national average standards by the age of 16, there are some exceptions in individual subjects. Pupils' standards of work are now above average in mathematics, art and design and design and technology and music. In mathematics, art and design and design and technology, attainment has clearly improved since last year and pupils in Year 11 are now doing well in comparison with their attainment when they arrived at the school. In geography and history, standards are now average and closer to those indicated by the GCSE results of previous years, rather than those for 2001.

9. Pupils' attainment in English and ICT remains below the national average at the end of Year 11. In English there are clear signs of standards improving, particularly in Years 7 to 9, but the current Year 11 have experienced staffing difficulties at various stages in their school career and their attainment still reflects these weaknesses. In fact, this group gained much lower national test results at the end of Year 9 than those generally achieved by the school. They are therefore doing as well as might reasonably be expected in Year 11 and their achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory.

10. In ICT, the situation is rather different. At the time of the previous inspection, there was very little opportunity for pupils to develop ICT skills or use them in the various subject areas. In the last three years the situation has improved significantly but the current Year 11 pupils have not had a full range of opportunities to develop their skills in ICT. In addition, there are weaknesses in the current arrangements for ICT, both in the particular ICT lessons and

in the use of ICT in the various subjects of the curriculum, which contribute to pupils' under-achievement in the subject.

11. Pupils' literacy skills are average for their age. The majority of pupils speak fluently and clearly, though lower attaining pupils tend to express themselves too briefly and find difficulty in explaining themselves when questioned. Most pupils have a sound understanding of what they read and know how to obtain information by using books, journals and the Internet. Higher attaining pupils can read with some depth of understanding and are able to probe and explain the finer meaning of words. All but the lowest attainers can match their style to the purpose for which they are writing, and so are able to write, for example, reports, descriptions and narratives. Most pupils know how to re-draft written work to improve its quality. However, the work of many middle and lower attaining pupils is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

12. Pupils generally have good numeracy skills for their age. In all years, pupils successfully plot, use and interpret a range of types of graph. This is seen in design and technology, geography, mathematics, especially in statistics, and science. In Year 11 science, pupils in top and middle sets use mathematics in formulas, weights and percentage energy changes. Lower attaining pupils understand proportionality when discussing acid strength and the number of reacting particles. Numeracy skills are well developed across all year groups and are particularly evident when pupils take readings or identify trends.

The progress of pupils with special educational needs

13. Pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs and those with statements of special educational need make good progress overall, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. The early identification of groups of pupils with low literacy skills and the good support they receive, both in class and in withdrawal groups, to improve these skills, result in pupils making particularly good progress in reading. The support they receive, plus the additional lessons they have in literacy, make a significant contribution to pupils in Years 7 to 9 improving and consolidating their basic skills. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who attend school regularly make good progress and achieve well in GCSE examinations. However, the progress of a few pupils with special needs in Years 10 and 11 is restricted because they do not attend school regularly.

The school's targets for examination results

14. The school sets challenging targets for its performance in GCSE examinations. It met the target for five or more grades A* to G in 2001 but not the overall target or the target for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C. The targets for 2002 are no less demanding than those for 2001. The school's monitoring system suggests that these targets should be met, but there are indications that these estimates are optimistic in some subjects. The school would be right to set itself targets that are slightly above its actual expectations but there is a big gap between the 2001 results and the target for 2002. Even though standards are rising, the school will find it difficult to meet the target of 52 per cent for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory. Pupils are usually happy at school. There is good involvement in some school activities, notably sporting activities, and boys wish that more such opportunities were available.

16. The school has not yet fully established the 'achievement culture' that is one of its aims. Some pupils have a casual attitude towards their work in school. They often come poorly equipped for lessons and have to borrow basic equipment like pens and pencils.

17. Most pupils behave appropriately in lessons. When teaching is particularly skilful, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. However, there is a small but significant number of pupils, mostly boys, who arrive at lessons unwilling to work and determined to be disruptive. Examples of this type of behaviour were seen in occasional lessons across a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, ICT and business studies. These lessons involved both older and younger pupils. For example, in an English lesson, a few boys were generally intent on causing difficulties. Some pupils, mostly girls, managed to get on with their work, ignoring what was going on around them. However, others were distracted and their learning was clearly hindered. Even in lessons where behaviour is acceptable there is often an undercurrent of chatter, for example in a minority of design and technology lessons and personal and social education lessons. Pupils of all ages reported that the immature behaviour of a few pupils does disrupt some lessons in, for example, non-examination courses in Year 10 and in lessons taken by supply teachers.

18. The lessons in which there is unsatisfactory behaviour only occur occasionally in each individual subject but they do, nevertheless, have a significant impact on many pupils' learning and their eventual overall achievement. The school acknowledges that this was a factor in the GCSE results in 2001 being lower than expected. It is also significant that girls did better than boys and, in several subjects, the gap between boys' and girls' results was wider than that found nationally. This is a reflection of the pattern in which boys instigate much of the unsatisfactory behaviour and are more easily distracted by it, whereas many girls manage to maintain their concentration.

19. There are some subjects, such as history, where pupils consistently have good attitudes towards their work. Pupils enjoy these subjects, showing interest and concentration. Behaviour is good as a result of the good working relationships that teachers have established with their pupils and good, effective class management. While pupils generally work well together in lessons such as physical education, demonstrating good co-operation and collaborating well within the lesson, not all pupils manage to keep up high standards of behaviour. For example, in a Year 7 physical education lesson for boys, some silly behaviour developed on the way back to the changing rooms.

20. Pupils often behave well in formal situations; for example, behaviour was good in all assemblies. Pupils were polite and tolerant during some very long assemblies. The atmosphere in the dining room is usually good.

21. The number of fixed term exclusions is high and has increased significantly since the previous inspection. This reflects the incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour seen in the school. The majority of exclusions are associated with pupils behaving in an inappropriate way towards their teachers.

22. Relationships between staff and pupils are usually good. However a small number of pupils are too familiar with teachers and do not always afford staff the respect they deserve. Relationships between pupils are generally good but pupils tend to operate in rather specific

friendship groups. For example, boys and girls do not usually work together. Pupils and parents report little bullying and the incidents that do occur are dealt with well. Pupils get the opportunity to demonstrate and develop their respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs in geography, history and religious education lessons. Most religious education lessons involve pupils considering the needs of others and class management in that subject always stresses mutual respect and qualities such as empathy and sensitivity. Activities in these lessons encourage pupils to develop self-knowledge and self-control.

23. Opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility have declined since the previous inspection and there are now very few. This has a significant effect on the personal development of pupils. Pupils do develop more mature attitudes as they get older and most realise that they have to work harder when studying for GCSE examinations. Pupils also develop the capacity to make honest evaluations of their work, for example, in design and technology. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to influence what happens in their school; for example, there is no longer a school council.

24. Pupils with special educational needs generally show a willingness to learn and respond well in lessons. In withdrawal groups they sustain concentration, even when working flat out in full one-hour lessons, and are always willing to ask and answer questions. They get on well with their teachers and special needs support assistants. A tiny minority of boys with special needs are poorly behaved and disruptive. Across all years, pupils with special educational needs mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school.

25. Attendance rates have decreased since the previous inspection and are now below the national average. Attendance in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory but it declines to unsatisfactory by the time pupils are studying for GCSE examinations. There are too many pupils who take holidays in term time and some pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taken on holiday even in the very important first week of the school year. Rates of unauthorised absence have been inaccurately calculated by the school. Older pupils often take odd days off school and this affects their progress. The school ensures that all pupils attend for their GCSE examinations by collecting pupils from home if necessary but erratic attendance results in some pupils gaining lower GCSE grades than they should.

26. Most pupils arrive at school on time. There is a problem with school buses and late buses can result in large numbers of pupils missing the start of the school day. In addition there is a small but significant number of pupils who are frequently late for school without good reason.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. The quality of teaching, and the learning that such teaching promotes, is satisfactory overall and in all year groups. Teaching is good in mathematics, art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects.

28. A substantial number of individual lessons, 65 per cent of those observed, are good or better. However, the overall judgement that teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, reflects certain weaknesses that occur in lessons that are otherwise satisfactory. These weaknesses are not major or frequent features within individual subjects but they clearly have an impact on pupils' overall progress and eventual achievement.

29. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and often put considerable effort into ensuring that they are fully informed about the latest initiatives. For

example, in English, teachers are very knowledgeable about the requirements of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy and use aspects of the strategy most effectively to raise standards. Teachers in other subjects are also well informed about ways of improving literacy skills and teachers in several subjects, notably history, make good use of supportive frameworks for writing, encourage re-drafting of written work and emphasise the importance of using key words correctly. Although teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics, there is not yet any overall co-ordination of these opportunities. Teachers in most subjects do not make enough use of ICT to increase the variety of learning activities.

30. Lessons are often particularly successful when they have a tight structure. Lessons in mathematics, for example, begin with a swift, demanding 'mental starter' before moving to the main topic and activity of the lesson. At the end of the lesson, a review of what pupils have learnt during the lesson provides considerable satisfaction for pupils as well as confirming and consolidating the progress they have made.

31. Another strength of the teaching in the school is the extra time that teachers give to pupils outside lessons. In addition to formal revision classes, teachers are often available to help with problems that arise. This commitment is much appreciated by pupils and their parents. Teachers usually expect pupils to try hard and do their best. They generally have good relationships with pupils and manage them well.

32. There are some examples of very good and excellent teaching. In a very good religious education lesson for Year 7, the teacher made her expectations clear with the firm use of recognised behaviour management procedures and then went straight into a lively brainstorm to introduce the topic. The very quick pace was then maintained throughout group work on selected paintings of Jesus' life. Visually impaired pupils were provided with three-dimensional artefacts and presented their findings, using the artefacts, along with other groups, to the rest of the class. The class was fully engaged throughout the lesson by the interesting variety of tasks and frequent changes in learning style. In a design and technology lesson, the high standards expected by the teacher were indicated by a very good demonstration of how to use drawing implements. The clarity of the instruction ensured that pupils knew exactly what they had to do and so could make very swift progress in developing their drawing skills and designing a logo based on their initials.

33. The weakness that occurs most frequently in lessons that are satisfactory is a tendency for teachers to plan learning activities that meet the needs of the majority of the class without considering sufficiently the range of attainment in the group. Their planning ensures satisfactory learning for the majority. However, these activities, along with the associated materials and resources, are often not entirely suitable for the highest and lowest attainers in the group. Lower attainers often receive additional support, either from the teacher or from learning support assistants and usually, though not always, cope adequately with the demands made on them. The problem is more acute with the higher attainers who may just work faster or more productively on the same activity. Under these circumstances the higher attainers do not learn as fast as they should. This effect is seen from time to time in many subjects but is a particular feature of some lessons in mathematics, geography, history, ICT and modern foreign languages.

34. Another weakness that occurs occasionally across several subjects is a tendency for the lesson to move rather slowly, often with the teacher spending too much time talking to the class. Under these circumstances, many pupils find it difficult to maintain concentration, their attention wanders and they tend to chat to each other with an obvious slowing of the rate of learning.

35. In most lessons, as one might expect, the quality of pupils' learning reflects the quality of the teaching they receive. However, there are occasions, across a range of subjects, when a few pupils arrive at the lesson disinclined to do any work and intent on causing trouble. It is to the credit of some pupils in these lessons that they continue to work while the teacher struggles to manage the trouble-makers. However, under these circumstances, even with the best efforts of teachers to motivate the badly behaved pupils and manage their behaviour, the learning of many pupils in the lesson is adversely affected. Similar behaviour problems occur in most of the small number of unsatisfactory lessons, but in these lessons there are significant weaknesses in planning and/or a failure to manage these demanding pupils appropriately. There were only a few of these incidents of unsatisfactory learning observed directly during the inspection, but pupils confirm that such incidents are not confined to inspection week.

36. Teachers generally mark pupils' work regularly and the quality of marking is satisfactory in most subjects. Marking is particularly helpful in history where teachers achieve the right balance between encouraging pupils and indicating weaknesses. Although there are variations in the quality of marking within both English and science, there is, in both subjects, much good marking that tells pupils precisely what they need to do to improve. Informal assessment in lessons and the resulting spoken feedback to pupils are often more helpful than teachers' marking of written work and this is a particular feature in physical education, ICT and, especially, in mathematics where the department does not generally make written comments or give marks in pupils' books.

37. The school makes satisfactory use of homework to support and extend pupils' learning. Within most subjects, homework is set reasonably regularly and the tasks are appropriate. Homework is generally used well in history and modern foreign languages. There are also some weaknesses in individual subjects: homework is set inconsistently in mathematics, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 need more homework in design and technology and homework in geography is restricted by the availability of textbooks for pupils to take home. Pupils' planners indicate some large gaps where homework has not been set or pupils have not written it down. Some homeworks are rather undemanding and 'finishing off' the work done in class is very common. It is clear that more rigorous monitoring of homework is needed if the best use is to be made of homework to raise standards.

38. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. It is better in Years 7 to 9 because of the very good teaching that some pupils receive when they are withdrawn from their lessons to receive extra support. Teaching is good in mathematics, music, art and design, design technology, religious education throughout the school and in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9. It is satisfactory in other subjects. Teachers have a sound knowledge of each pupil's needs from the information provided by the school's co-ordinator. In some subjects, such as religious education, teachers plan lessons and prepare materials especially for the special needs pupils in the class and this enables these pupils to learn more effectively. In others, for example, science, pupils with special needs use the same materials and worksheets as other pupils. Relationships between pupils and their teachers and special needs support assistants are good. They give pupils confidence and help to raise their self-esteem. The marking of pupils' work by specialist teachers is often good and helps pupils identify their weak spots and set targets for improvement. Special

needs support assistants are used effectively to support pupils and monitor their learning in lessons.

39. The proportion of teaching that is good or better has risen since the time of the previous inspection and the number of lessons judged to be unsatisfactory has fallen.

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

40. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which has several good features. Involvement in a number of curriculum projects is having a beneficial effect on the school's planning for continual improvement of its courses. Well-planned schemes of work ensure that most aspects of the National Curriculum are delivered fully, except for ICT in Year 11, where limited time for the subject has had an adverse effect on standards. Similarly, the time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 does not allow full coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

41. The quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good overall because it includes all subjects of the National Curriculum along with religious education and personal and social education. All pupils also study drama, thus increasing their confidence and ability to express themselves. As one of the pilot schools for the Key Stage 3 Strategy, the school is successfully working to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy among the lowest attaining pupils. A two-week summer school for pupils transferring to Crofton has helped prepare these pupils for the challenge of secondary school. The needs of higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented are being met in mathematics by the creation of an extra class in Year 9 for those pupils with the potential to achieve the highest levels of attainment.

42. History and art and design were nominated by the school for involvement in another strand of the Key Stage 3 strategy, concerned with teaching and learning in foundation subjects. In history, the project has led to added emphasis on teaching literacy and historical skills, which is raising standards. The whole curriculum is enriched by residential visits in Years 7 and 9 and humanities fieldwork in York in Year 8. A conference on the Holocaust, with visiting speakers and workshop activities, plays an important part in making Year 9 pupils aware of the extreme consequences of racism. French is the only modern foreign language taught in Years 7 to 9, which makes it difficult to encourage more than a handful of pupils to take up German in Year 10.

43. In Years 10 and 11, the school offers pupils a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. The curriculum includes all National Curriculum subjects, along with religious, personal and social education and a satisfactory range of optional subjects. For the first time this year, higher attaining pupils have the valuable opportunity to study for a triple award in science. Some very large classes, in top and some middle sets, are having an adverse effect on the learning activities that can be undertaken in French, English and mathematics. There is only one vocational course within the option system at present and there are some signs in the attendance pattern that a number of pupils lack motivation and interest in school at this stage. The school is rightly exploring ways of increasing the range of vocational courses to motivate those pupils who struggle with a mainly academic curriculum. Arrangements with Wakefield College make it possible for a few pupils to start college courses early in Year 11.

The school's arrangements for developing literacy

44. The school's strategy for teaching literacy is good. The English department's coverage of speaking and listening, reading and writing is thorough. The National Strategy for literacy has been used effectively to revise the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Lower attaining pupils are taught in special groups in Year 7. They follow a programme of study that closely matches their needs and they make rapid progress.

45. A literacy co-ordinator has been recently appointed and he, in consultation with other teachers, has produced a policy for teaching literacy across the curriculum. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities, across the curriculum, that enable them to develop their skills in literacy. Thus, in most subjects, pupils are systematically taught the important words in a topic and supportive frameworks are provided for middle and lower attainers to help them structure their ideas. A number of subjects provide opportunities for extended writing, including English, science, history, geography and art and design. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the emphasis on literacy across departments.

The school's arrangements for developing numeracy

46. The school does not have a whole school numeracy policy. However, a draft policy is currently under discussion. A recent audit has been carried out in departmental areas, to determine those areas where mathematical skills are needed. The mathematics department has already produced good support material to assist non-specialist teachers.

47. Pupils generally have good numeracy skills but there is scope for further improvement. Clearly, the mathematics department has the major role in developing these skills and it does so enthusiastically and effectively. Some other departments, notably science, design and technology and geography, already provide some good opportunities for pupils to use and improve their skills. For example, in Year 7 geography, numeracy skills are well developed as pupils handle distance and scales and use degrees of the compass. In science, a corridor wall display, prepared by pupils, illustrates the use of mathematics in science. The school is aware that it is now necessary to consolidate this good practice throughout all departments and a training session for all staff is planned.

Personal and social education

48. Provision for personal and social education is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has developed a programme of study of good quality that meets the needs of pupils. Good attention is paid to health education. Drugs and sex education are taught at appropriate times and the school is starting to develop its citizenship curriculum. Form tutors teach personal and social education and they are provided with very clear guidance about how to deliver each lesson. However, teachers' interpretation of the guidance varies and the quality of the teaching is very variable; some lessons are very good but others are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has started to monitor the quality of lessons but this monitoring needs to be extended to ensure that all pupils receive high quality teaching in the subject. Except in Year 11, there are few visiting speakers to provide additional variety within personal and social education.

Careers education

49. The school makes good overall provision for careers education. The school's programme of careers education lessons is satisfactory. The co-ordinator and the careers officer work well together. The pupils value the work of the careers officer who endeavours to provide every pupil with high quality support. This is achieved through very careful organisation where vulnerable pupils receive early individual interviews and more independent pupils are offered group interviews. The result is that pupils of all abilities generally have very clear ideas about what they want to do when they leave school and the steps they have to take in order to reach their goals.

The arrangements for pupils with special educational needs

50. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils have full access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are carefully constructed after wide consultation with teachers, pupils and parents. However, they lack short-term attainable targets. The enhancements that are made to the curriculum for these pupils are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7 to 9. As well as their National Curriculum subjects, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have 'catch up' lessons. All pupils are tested for reading before they enter the school and those who require extra support are withdrawn from lessons on a rolling programme so that they do not miss the same lesson each week. In Years 10 and 11 pupils take GCSE examinations and a small number do the ASDAN award. The department is beginning to develop the use of work placements in Years 10 and 11. However, there is no extra-curricular support for pupils with special educational needs.

The supported learning centre

51. The supported learning centre is an innovative and successful provision to help a small number of pupils who are in danger of permanent exclusion from school because of their inability to cope with the daily routines of school life. The centre has its own classrooms, computer facilities and a working kitchen where pupils offer hospitality and re-establish good relationships with teachers. It is a well-managed resource with specialist staff, and voluntary support from many subject teachers. It provides a flexible programme of activities that are agreed with subject teachers to meet individual needs. There are working links for pupils with further education colleges, and alternative qualifications are provided for those withdrawn from mainstream programmes.

52. The centre is effective in improving pupils' attendance by working in close partnership with parents. It provides training in self-awareness and anger management, with the result that it has a good record of pupils being able to return to the mainstream with improved social skills. It successfully achieves its objectives by ensuring that pupils understand why they are there, by agreeing a programme of change and by setting targets for re-integration.

Links with other educational institutions

53. The school has satisfactory links with other educational institutions. It gathers extensive information from the primary school about prospective Year 7 pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs. This ensures that pupils settle quickly and very few mistakes are made when forming tutor groups. Links with individual departments are satisfactory but not extensive and mostly relate to literacy and numeracy. For example, there is an annual mathematics workshop for Year 6 pupils in the summer term. The school has well established links with the two main colleges where pupils continue their education post 16. Pupils value the opportunity to visit Wakefield College for a 'taster day' when they can find out about and experience the courses on offer. There are particularly strong links between this college and the visually impaired unit and special educational needs department. The school also has good links with North East Wakefield College where many pupils go to study for A levels. The school ensures that pupils can make informed choices about where and what to study when they leave school.

Extra-curricular activities

54. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. In sport, there are more opportunities for girls than boys. In music there are choirs and bands but they do not all run throughout the year and there are few opportunities to go to concerts. Art is enriched by the opportunities for sculpture at Bretton Hall. Modern foreign languages provide lunchtime clubs and annual trips to France. Most subjects put on revision classes in the run-up to examinations. There are opportunities in physical education, design and technology, and art and design for pupils to

extend their learning within lunchtime activities. The annual carol concert and Christmas pantomime give pupils good opportunities to perform. The school library is well used at all times of the day but the computer rooms offer only limited lunchtime availability to pupils, other than those on the GNVQ course. Plans for a programme of extra activities for gifted and talented pupils have not yet been implemented.

Provision for pupils' personal development

55. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall but there are some significant weaknesses. The school's statement of aims and values and its policy statement make clear the commitment to this aspect of its work. However the policy lacks 'teeth'. Most subjects do not plan how they are going to provide for the various aspects of pupils' personal development and therefore valuable opportunities are missed.

56. The provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Pupils attend only one assembly each week. During the inspection, only one of these made any attempt to address values and beliefs and none could be described as an act of worship. There is no attempt to provide any regular time of reflection such as a "Thought for the Day" in form time and consequently the school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Religious education provides very good opportunities for spiritual development. Pupils reflect on the uniqueness of human nature and think about the nature of God, further developing their own system of beliefs and values. There is an annual conference for Year 9 pupils in which they study the Holocaust. In physical education and, in the personal and social education programme, pupils are encouraged to develop self-esteem. An art and design project focuses on the beliefs associated with totems. Other subjects make little or no planned provision.

57. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' moral development. The school makes clear that it sets standards of right and wrong through its code of conduct but there are some inconsistencies in the expectations and standards of behaviour accepted in different areas of school life. For example, the standards expected in lessons often appear higher than those accepted in corridors. Form tutors, who usually know their pupils well, teach a carefully planned programme of personal and social education, featuring health education and crime awareness and the school participates in police liaison and crime prevention schemes. For those pupils in Key Stage 4 who are felt to need added support in their transition to post-school life, there is a special programme, run in co-operation with the careers and youth services. The school makes clear that it will not tolerate bullying or racism and pupils recently participated in the Leeds-based "Kick racism into touch" programme. Most subjects contribute appropriately to pupils' opportunities to develop moral values. English, geography, history, religious education and science consider moral issues; physical education stresses the importance of rules and fair play.

58. The provision for pupils' social education is good overall but there is one area that needs improvement. Pupils' ability to relate successfully to others is well developed. All Year 7 and Year 9 pupils take part in short residential experiences which help to make the tutor group a supportive social unit. There are other residential and outdoor education opportunities. A feature of most subjects is the collaborative manner in which pupils are encouraged to work. The way in which teachers plan for the full inclusion of visually impaired pupils benefits everybody in the school and encourages pupils to be considerate and sensitive to the needs of others. An art and design project and drama activities give further opportunities for pupils to work together and with adults. Every effort is made to provide areas in which pupils can socialise at break and lunchtime. The Supported Learning Unit is effective in helping pupils who find it difficult to relate successfully with others. In contrast to these good aspects of provision, there is little opportunity for pupils to exercise responsibility or

develop initiative. There is no school council or any formal structure through which pupils can have a voice in the organisation of the school. Other than on public occasions, such as parents' evenings, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility. An extensive programme of study support clubs in most subjects offers pupils the opportunity to make positive choices to participate. The school's community library is indicative of its close links with the local community offering extensive facilities for both pupils and adults. It is deservedly popular. As part of the personal and social education programme, Year 9 pupils learn about democracy by participating in a mock election campaign and engage in community service projects. There are satisfactory links with industry, through the work experience programme, and with local churches and other community groups. The Year 8 'industry day' provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to work with local industrialists, often on environmental issues.

59. The school provides satisfactorily for pupils' cultural development, mainly through art and design, drama and music. A large group of younger pupils have recently completed a project with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park culminating in a ceramic mural which is to be displayed on an external wall of the school. The department has hosted an artist in residence. There have been a number of small-scale drama productions and there are occasional opportunities for pupils to visit local theatres. All Year 8 pupils take part in a week of activities and visits connected with the City of York. However, elsewhere within the curriculum there are few opportunities for all pupils to experience some of the cultural opportunities of the region. In English and music, pupils study the work of authors, poets and composers and there is an enthusiastic and talented wind band that rehearses at lunchtime. Several subjects help prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society. Art and music study work from other cultures, design and technology includes the study of food from the Mediterranean and textile design from the East. Modern foreign languages organises a Club Francais and there are opportunities for pupils to visit Europe for cultural and sporting activities. In geography and history, pupils study other countries and societies and in religious education pupils develop their knowledge of world faiths and their associated cultures through lessons and contact with local faith communities. However there are no links with schools in nearby multicultural areas nor is there any evidence that the school celebrates the contribution made to British society by other cultures.

60. There has been little change in the provision for pupils' personal development since the previous inspection. It remains largely unplanned and the shortage of opportunities for spiritual development remains an issue for the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

61. The school has a strong pastoral system which is a strength of the school. Year heads and form tutors move through the school with pupils and, over five years, get to know the pupils extremely well. Heads of year and form tutors give very valuable support to pupils who are experiencing difficulties at home or at school. Year groups are now larger than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Heads of year are fully stretched and have to work extremely hard to deal with the problems that arise from their year group; there are no deputy or assistant year heads who might offer assistance. Induction procedures are good and help pupils to settle quickly. There are good procedures for child protection. The school follows local procedures and teachers are well aware of child protection issues.

62. The school always endeavours to keep its pupils safe. Governors are involved in monitoring health and safety procedures and there are regular risk assessments. Unfortunately the school has not yet succeeded in resolving the health and safety issues identified in the previous report, namely broken glass in areas where pupils play and dogs having access to the playing field. Pupils, except those in Year 7, are allowed out of school at

lunch times and, despite supervision by senior staff, some pupils continue to take unnecessary risks when crossing the road. Staff on the reception desk are kind and compassionate with pupils who are sick or injured. However there is a need to improve procedures to ensure that the school has written permission from parents before giving pupils a pain killer.

63. The monitoring and support of personal development is largely informal and information is remembered by form tutors and written up in detail on pupils' annual reports. This is satisfactory because form tutors get to know pupils so well over the years.

64. The school has not improved its use of tutor time since the time of the previous inspection. In most registration periods pupils just sit and chat and tutor time is not used effectively to provide a useful and structured start to the day. Planners are still not used to full effect as a means of monitoring academic progress and personal development. Many checks of planners are cursory and older pupils often make limited use of their planners.

65. Assessment of pupils' work is now satisfactory. Some subjects such as modern foreign languages, music, history, science, design and technology and religious instruction have effective arrangements for assessing pupils' work. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory in mathematics and information technology. In mathematics and science, pupils' work is not always marked effectively and, although pupils know whether they have got things right or wrong, they are sometimes unable to tell what they need to do to improve. Different departments use different methods of grading assessment; some departments use National Curriculum levels as a basis for assessment but others do not. For example, assessment is satisfactory in physical education but it could be improved by assessing more regularly and linking the assessments to National Curriculum levels so that pupils know how well they are doing on a national scale. Most departments use assessment to influence teaching strategies and curriculum. For example, in modern foreign languages, analysis of assessment data led to a decision to change examination boards and this has contributed to a significant improvement in examination results.

66. The school has made substantial improvements in monitoring pupils' academic progress. The school now analyses data and uses it to set targets. Pupils' national test results at the age of 11, together with results from commercial tests, are used to set targets for the end of Year 9 and these are used by departments. Results of the Year 9 tests, together with early baseline assessments, are used to set targets for GCSE scores. Although the systems employed are fairly complex, they do usually result in realistic targets for individual pupils and subjects. However, the current targets for English are rather ambitious.

67. Assessment systems are used to identify pupils who are underachieving in Years 10 and 11. In Year 11 a senior member of staff is attached to each form and acts as a counsellor. This has mixed success. Sometimes there are too many pupils for one member of staff to counsel successfully. Often, senior members of staff have considerable workloads and have little available time to perform this role. However some senior members of staff, despite very heavy commitments, take this role very seriously and support the pupils assigned to them most effectively.

68. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs and bringing any concerns to the attention of the learning support department are good. Pupils are identified from their national test scores at the end of Year 6, from the tests that pupils do before they enter the school in Year 7, from teacher observation and from information provided by primary schools, parents and external agencies.

69. The school uses manual registers and form tutors and clerical staff spend significant amounts of time producing attendance figures from the neat, well-kept registers. Unfortunately these figures are not always accurate and unauthorised absence is under-reported. The close of the register is very late. There are pupils who frequently arrive extremely late missing at least two lessons from the three available in the morning, yet they are sometimes marked as present in the registers. The school has recently started to contact parents on the first occasion when a pupil is absent but the administrative assistant does not have sufficient allocated time to allow this approach to work effectively. At present, the parents of pupils who have established patterns of poor attendance may be rung on the first day of absence but the school is missing the opportunity to ring the parents of pupils who might be just starting to take unnecessary time away from school. Records are not kept of parents' responses. There is also a missed opportunity to develop more regular communication between the school and these parents.

70. A considerable amount of time and energy is spent trying to encourage pupils with very poor attendance records to come into school, often with limited success. The school has recently experienced problems with accessing education welfare support because of staff illness. There is some limited provision for pupils to reduce the number of GCSE subjects they are studying and to follow college courses or take part in work experience. The school offers very few vocational courses such as GNVQs or shortened GCSEs courses that might provide a less stressful and more relevant curriculum for some pupils.

71. The school has recognised the need to improve the ways in which it encourages pupils to behave well. Very good information has been provided to help teachers manage pupils in the classroom. The majority of teachers manage pupils very effectively. However in this school there is a small minority of pupils whose behaviour can challenge even the most effective teachers. The school lacks sufficiently effective strategies to remove these pupils from the classroom situation so that teachers can teach and willing pupils can learn. Very detailed records are kept of pupils' unacceptable behaviour, but heads of year spend unnecessary time producing records in triplicate. There is a need to streamline the system in order to make it more manageable.

72. There is a supported learning centre which provides for pupils with the most extreme problems and behaviour who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Early indications are that the unit has been very successful at promoting inclusion. Vulnerable pupils with poor attendance records have substantially increased their attendance at school. Others with records of exclusion have been successfully reintegrated into school on either a full or partial timetable.

73. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy. Pupils are confident that very few experience bullying and report that, if problems are reported to the head of year, they are dealt with well.

74. The school is trying to establish an environment where learning and high achievement are more highly valued by pupils. Tutors and subject teachers award stickers, which are collected over time to lead to silver, gold and platinum awards. Younger pupils value these but older pupils can be reluctant to accept praise. Postcards celebrating achievement are sometimes sent to the homes of older pupils. It was evident in a Year 10 personal and social education class that few pupils had received these awards and some were not even aware of their existence. Some pupils who found academic work difficult, but who felt they had applied themselves well, were disappointed that they had not received any rewards.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

75. Parents are generally satisfied with the standard of education offered by the school. The school is over-subscribed and many parents have actively chosen to send their children to this school. They feel that the school expects their children to work hard and do their best. The inspection team generally agrees with the parents about the school's expectations. However, the team also found that, although some pupils are determined to apply themselves well and work hard, the school has not yet fully developed a culture where all pupils come into all lessons expecting to settle down to work. Parents report that they find it easy to approach the school should they have a problem or question. They find the pastoral support system to be of high quality. The inspection confirmed this and found that heads of year and form tutors make a considerable effort to support both parents and pupils.

76. A significant number of parents expressed concerns about standards of behaviour and felt that some incidents of poor behaviour affected the learning of others. The inspection team agrees with parents' concerns. Although most pupils behave at least satisfactorily in most lessons, there are a few lessons in which there is inappropriate behaviour from a small number of boys that makes it difficult for others to learn properly. Parents were also concerned about homework and the use of planners. The use of homework was found to be satisfactory but there was some evidence of occasional low-level tasks being set or homework simply consisting of finishing off the work done in class. Pupils do not always record homework in their planners and many form tutors do not monitor planners effectively. Planners are not used as a genuine means of communication between home and school.

77. Parents are usually supportive of the school and want their children to do well. However, a number of parents feel that education is the job of the school and are reluctant to be actively involved. A small number of parents felt that the school does not work closely enough with parents. The school has not run any courses specifically for parents and there is scope for more efforts to involve reluctant parents in the life of the school. There is a Friends Association which has raised valuable funds for the school through social events.

78. Parents expressed concerns about the information they receive from school. The inspection team found information for parents to be unsatisfactory. The school produces a helpful brochure, supplemented by a booklet, which contains useful day-to-day information about the work of the school. Once pupils start at the school, parents then do not receive enough information about school activities; there are no newsletters and the school generally communicates with parents only to give specific, essential information. A significant number of parents expressed concern about low numbers of activities available outside lesson or were unsure about what went on outside lessons and this is a reflection of the shortage of information for parents about the day-to-day life of the school. However the Governors' Report to Parents is a full and informative document, which meets statutory requirements.

The home-school agreement is not as effective as it should be because parents are not required, directly and specifically, to agree to ensure that their children: attend regularly, carry the correct equipment, get to school on time and do their homework. For example, it does not indicate that it expects parents to ensure that their children: attend regularly; do not go on holiday in term time; carry the correct equipment; get to school on time and do their homework.

79. There are regular parents' evenings, including an early parents' meeting for Year 7 pupils where parents can discuss how their children are settling in with the form tutor. Reports are unsatisfactory, because they do not give parents a clear indication of their child's attainment and progress. The text of the reports is sometimes of good quality, clearly informing parents of their children's strengths and weaknesses and what they need to improve. However, in other reports, there is often an emphasis on how pupils respond and behave rather than what they know, understand and can or cannot do. There is no formal opportunity within the report for pupils to indicate how well they think they are doing.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The leadership and management of the school are both good. The headteacher has clear principles and aims for the school and these are shared, supported and reinforced by the leadership team and the staff of the school.

81. The principle that guides the work of the school is a will and determination to provide the very best care and support for each individual pupil. Every pupil is valued by the school, irrespective of the problems and difficulties he or she faces or the challenges the pupil poses to the school. This school was an 'inclusive' school long before the principle of fully including all pupils became a particular focus for schools nationally. This emphasis on the importance of every individual pupil is an important strength of the school and is the major reason why lower attaining pupils do so well in GCSE examinations, relative to their earlier attainment. Nothing is too much trouble for teachers, and particularly the leadership team, in ensuring that pupils complete their courses and attend for examinations.

82. However, this emphasis on individual support has also produced some anomalies and a few weaknesses. One very practical example, the matter of class sizes, can be used to illustrate the situation. The school has been through a period when finances have been stretched by the need to pay off what was, effectively, a loan from the local education authority. The number of pupils in the school has grown and only a limited number of teachers is available. Hence the school, and individual subjects, have to make difficult decisions about how pupils are to be distributed between teaching groups. It is entirely correct that groups for lower attaining pupils should be smaller than those for higher attainers and that lower attainers should have additional support. However, this means that middle and higher 'sets' become larger and here the balance has swung too far. Sets of well over 30 pupils exist in mathematics, modern foreign languages and English. In such circumstances, several problems arise and, in particular, behaviour management becomes difficult. Hence a real intention to do the best for some pupils actually disadvantages others.

83. A strength of the management of this school is the system of departmental reviews which has been refined and developed since the previous inspection. The GCSE results in 2001, particularly at grades A* to C were disappointing in several subjects and overall. The review system picked up most of the issues that had adversely affected examination results and plans were made to overcome the weaknesses. The work seen during the inspection showed that middle and higher attaining pupils are now achieving better than they did in 2001 and the work that has been done as a result of the reviews is having a real impact on

progress. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go in ensuring that all pupils achieve well at the end of Year 11.

84. The leadership team members bring a range of complementary skills, and sometimes differing viewpoints, to their work. The headteacher is skilful in leading the team and enabling each member to make his or her own effective contribution to the work of the school. One of the most important contributions made by the team to raising pupils' attainment is in the work they do as 'links' with individual departments. This work has been particularly effective in ensuring a reasonable level of consistency across subject departments in terms of pupils' achievements, despite various problems, particularly with staffing, in the last school year. There is a problem currently with staffing in physical education and the leadership team is very active in ensuring that pupils' physical education lessons, and their progress in the subject, do not suffer.

85. The leadership and management of subject departments are good overall, although there is some variation between subjects. There is very good management in design and technology, modern foreign languages and music and excellent management in religious education. In modern languages the high quality management has so far produced a very significant rise in pupils' attainment, but these on-going improvements are not yet fully reflected in examination results. There are still subjects where pupils do not do as well as they do in others. However, there is clear evidence that effective action is being taken to make improvements in those subjects and that pupils' attainment is improving. There is currently no significant under-achievement in subjects, except in ICT where the subject has only been established in the school for three years and, although progress so far has been good, there is still much development and improvement work to be done.

86. The school improvement plan indicates appropriate priorities for the school's development and includes the required details on what is to be done and how it is to be monitored. For example, the school identified the need to improve its procedures for promoting good behaviour both in the plan and in the 'raising achievement' document produced following the review of the 2001 examination results. Inspection findings confirm that such improvements are necessary. However, although some progress has been made, stronger and more consistent action is still required. Department improvement plans vary in quality and the level of detail they provide but, overall, they represent good planning to underpin the departments' efforts to raise attainment.

87. The heads of year are skilful, hard-working and very committed to supporting the pupils in their care. The practice of keeping tutors and year heads with a group of pupils throughout their time in school provides good continuity and enables year teams to get to know their pupils well. However, the year groups are now large, with, for example, 231 pupils in Year 8. In addition, there are now a significant number of pupils who find it difficult to maintain good behaviour. Hence the heads of year are very stretched in trying to provide for all their pupils and to give as much support with behaviour as they would wish. There is a need to improve the systems they operate to avoid unnecessary administrative work and, as funds permit, to give them more time and/or support so that they can make the best possible contribution to maintaining the progress of all pupils in the year group.

88. The members of the Governing Body are enthusiastic and committed in their support for the school. The Chair of Governors, in particular, works very closely with the headteacher and is a valuable source of wisdom and perceptive questioning for the school. The Chair also provides a strong link between the school and the community of Crofton. He brings to life, for current pupils, the recent history of the village and its roots as a mining community. Many of the other governors are relative newcomers in their roles; they are busy people and their first hand knowledge of the day-to-day life of the school is necessarily limited. This restricts their

opportunity for holding the school to account and fulfilling their role as 'critical friends'. In fact, they are beginning to take a more active role and recently suggested training for newly appointed governors, which has now been introduced.

89. The Governing Body fulfil almost all of their statutory responsibilities for the school. However, the school does not meet the requirement to provide pupils with a daily act of collective worship and the current Year 11 will not have received their full entitlement to the National Curriculum programmes of study for ICT by the time they leave the school.

90. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator effectively promotes the interests of pupils with special educational needs and maintains a shared sense of purpose within the special educational needs team and throughout the school. Procedures and systems are of high quality but there is a need for greater liaison with support assistants, for example, by sharing the same base before and after school. At present there are no procedures for special needs support assistants to keep the co-ordinator informed of how pupils are progressing lesson by lesson to enable the co-ordinator to track and monitor pupils' progress across all subjects on a regular basis. Procedures for holding annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs are secure and parents are kept fully informed of pupils' progress. Links with primary schools are good. The department's computer based resources are under-used and more needs to be done to get pupils involved and interested in learning through the use of ICT.

Staffing

91. There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and their deployment to meet the needs of the school curriculum. There is a good balance between experienced and new staff. There is sufficient technical support for science and some aspects of design and technology, but more is needed for ICT and food and textiles. This shortage of support limits the time that teachers have for preparing lessons and associated materials. The office and support staff form an experienced team with a strong sense of loyalty to the school. They bring good levels of expertise to their work, show high levels of professional responsibility and ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The librarians provide good support and advice in maintaining an up-to-date selection of reading and reference materials.

92. The work of the school's learning support assistants is good. They know pupils well and are a significant factor in helping pupils learn effectively in ICT, art and design, design and technology, religious education, mathematics and English in Years 7 to 9. Special educational needs support assistants are not always as effective as they might be because they are not always informed of lesson plans in advance to give them time to plan strategies and prepare materials.

93. The support provided for both newly qualified teachers and teachers who are new to the school is very good and valued by participants. Professional development days and other staff training are well planned and have a focus that relates to the priorities identified in the school development plan. However, not all teachers are confident in using ICT to support teaching and learning and many teachers have not yet received sufficient training. Departments base their training needs on their own departmental priorities and individual members of staff have the chance to identify, and benefit from, appropriate training linked to performance management. The school's status as an 'Investor in People' has been important in its development and has led, for example, to significant professional development among support staff who have been enabled to change their roles or develop new skills within their existing posts.

Accommodation

94. Following the fire of 1995, the main school was rebuilt in 1998. Much of the accommodation in the new school is very good, except for the computer rooms, which are unsuitable for this purpose. Older premises, including the Old Hall, have been refurbished to a certain extent, to bring them up to a good standard. Overall, the school enjoys good facilities. Attractive displays of pupils' work create good learning environments in many subject areas.

95. The facilities for sport and physical education are excellent, consisting of a state-of-the-art gymnasium, sports hall and fitness room, plus extensive playing fields. Similarly, there are good accommodation and facilities for practical work in art and design, drama, music and technology, enabling pupils to work on a range of projects in a good learning environment.

96. The size, layout and ventilation of the ICT rooms are inadequate. Ventilation is a general problem in the new school, because of the window design. In warm weather, rooms quickly become stuffy, particularly where some sets contain up to 35 pupils, as they do in English, mathematics and French. Such large numbers in average-size classrooms restrict the range of learning activities that teachers can use.

97. The joint school and community library is a good facility that can accommodate a class of pupils, but is small for its dual role. There are no designated social areas for pupils in the new school, but the spacious school hall accommodates many pupils at lunchtimes and the school has been inventive in finding other areas for pupils to use out of lesson time. Pupils show their appreciation by taking satisfactory care of the school premises.

Resources for learning

98. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory overall. Subjects indicate their annual requirements in detailed bids and the allocation of funds is decided by the school's management in the light of the school development plan. The number of computers available within the school for use in teaching and learning, falls below the national target for 2002. There are three computer suites and the school has provision for networking. Science and design and technology have their own machines which are part of the network. Other subjects have little or no computer equipment in classrooms and have to rely on booking access to the main computer rooms. In some cases timetabling makes this difficult. The school is aware of this inadequacy and has plans to remedy it.

99. Most subjects have adequate supplies of textbooks and materials for class use but not for a general issue of textbooks to individual pupils. There are some shortages of books where several parallel classes are timetabled at the same time, for example, in geography. Several subjects make good use of the community as a resource with local field studies and visits. A link with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park has been well used to enhance pupils' experience in art and design.

100. A positive feature of the school is its library which is funded jointly by the school and Wakefield Library Service, with some initial funding from the parish council. Although the book stock falls below the recommendations of the School Library Association, the library provides a good resource for learning. Pupils have access to a wide range of books for borrowing and reference and the link with the wider library service gives them opportunities to obtain a very wide selection of material. Special subject project packs are available. Local primary schools also make use of the facility. The library recognises the needs of all pupils; there are stocks of books for those with reading difficulties and talking books and Braille volumes for pupils who have visual impairment. The library has computers connected to the school's network and to the Internet but the number is inadequate for the size of the school.

101. The school's resources have improved since the previous inspection and the major areas of shortage have either been partially or fully overcome, despite the school coping with an extended period of financial constraint.

Finance

102. The expenditure per pupil is in line with the national average. Finances are managed very effectively. The most recent auditor's report in July 2001 was satisfactory and the governing body accepted and has implemented the recommendations. The school had a significant deficit in its budget during a time when pupil numbers increased but the funding for these pupils was not received until the following financial year. By prudent and careful budgeting, this deficit is planned to be repaid by the end of the current financial year. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology to aid administration and management.

103. Opportunities are taken to ensure that the principles of 'best value' are followed when making decisions on the purchases of goods and services. These principles have been effectively applied with regard to decisions over staffing issues in the school. The school does compare its performance in detail with similar schools nationally, but there is still a tendency to over-emphasise comparisons with other local schools. The school consults parents on their views on specific issues, often through the Friends of Crofton committee. However, the consultation aspects of ensuring best value are under-developed and pupils in particular have few formal opportunities to express their views.

104. Financial planning is very good and the school has been successful in obtaining additional funds for the benefit of pupils. Specific grants, including those for special educational needs and money from the standards fund are spent effectively for the purposes for which they are intended and are in line with the priorities identified in the school's development plan. The school recognises that the 'New Opportunities' funding, for training teachers to feel confident and competent in using ICT, has not been used effectively and a re-launch of this initiative is currently being promoted.

105. In relation to the average level of funding the school receives and the satisfactory quality of education that it provides for pupils, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

106. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education provided, the school should:

- (1) improve the attainment of middle and higher attaining pupils, particularly boys, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning, both long term and short term, is appropriately modified to take account of the specific needs of pupils of different levels of attainment;
 - ensuring that all learning activities are sufficiently demanding and enable middle and higher attaining pupils to make the best possible progress;
 - reducing the size of classes for middle and higher attainers.(Paragraphs: 2, 3, 5, 7, 33, 82, 83, 96, 131, 139, 162, 164, 173, 181, 195, 214, 220)

- (2) improve pupils' attainment in ICT by:
 - ensuring that the tasks set in ICT lessons match the needs of all pupils;
 - ensuring that all departments identify appropriate opportunities, within their schemes of work, to use ICT to improve the quality of teaching and learning;
 - providing more training so that all teachers feel confident and competent to use ICT in their lessons;
 - implementing the planned improvements to the accommodation for ICT;
 - working to improve the level of ICT resources so that all teachers have access to computers to support teaching and learning in their subjects;
 - increasing the level of technician support for ICT;
 - ensuring that all pupils in the current Year 11 receive their full entitlement to the ICT programmes of study.(Paragraphs: 10, 29, 40, 89, 90, 91, 93, 96, 98, 100, 104, 117, 138, 158, 166, 174, 179-186, 200, 206)

- (3) improve pupils' attendance and punctuality by:
 - extending the work that is done in telephoning parents as soon as pupils are absent and ensuring that enough time is available to record parental responses to the calls;
 - ensuring that attendance figures are accurate so that the school has a clear indication of any changes in attendance patterns;
 - increasing the efforts to dissuade parents from taking pupils on holiday during term time;
 - extending the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to provide more appropriate courses for more of those pupils who may find a full range of GCSE subjects too demanding;
 - improving the use of morning registration time so that it consistently provides a useful and effective start to the day.(Paragraphs: 5, 13, 25, 26, 43, 64, 69, 70, 226)

- (4) improve the behaviour of the small number of pupils who disrupt lessons by:
- encouraging all teachers to expect the same high standards of behaviour from pupils;
 - ensuring that learning activities are sufficiently demanding, interesting and varied to hold pupils' attention and maintain motivation;
 - ensuring that teachers make consistent use of the school's behaviour management procedures in all their lessons;
 - ensuring that teachers are aware of, and use, effective strategies so that disruptive pupils can be removed from the classroom to work elsewhere in school.
- (Paragraphs: 5, 17-19, 21, 24, 35, 71, 76, 82, 86, 119, 120, 131, 139, 142, 143, 148, 164, 180, 192, 206, 221)
- (5) provide more opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and take on responsibilities within the school community.
- (Paragraphs: 23, 55, 58)

In addition to the key issues above, the governors should consider the following minor points for inclusion in their action plan:

- The information provided for parents should be improved and, in particular, pupils' reports should include more precise information on their progress.
(Paragraphs: 78, 79, 132, 200)
- The school should provide more opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, enabling pupils to reflect, to gain insights into values and beliefs and to develop spiritual awareness and self-knowledge.
(Paragraphs: 55, 56, 166)
- The school should provide a daily Act of Collective Worship for all pupils.
(Paragraph: 89)

THE WORK OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PUPILS

107. There are 10 pupils in the unit from all years except Year 10. The unit provides excellent education for all its pupils and they achieve very well. Pupils are fully integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and school life, wherever this is possible.

108. Teaching for pupils in the unit is very good. Teachers in mainstream classes provide the unit with the necessary planning to produce specialist materials well in advance. This high level of detailed and effective planning is a strong contributory factor in the high level of achievement of the pupils. Educational support assistants provide very skilled, caring and effective support. This is clearly seen, for example, in French lessons where support staff provide "running commentaries" in French to describe what is happening when the teacher uses flashcards or the overhead projector. Other support staff also contribute to the excellent support that these pupils receive. This is seen, for example, in design and technology where a technician has made a mobile workstation with Braille labels.

109. The local authority has provided very good support and resources in the unit are very good. Where necessary, pupils are provided with equipment to allow them to study more effectively. For example, pupils who use Braille have electronic note takers. The unit has very good resources for teachers and support assistants so that they can produce specialist materials for all subjects for each pupil.

110. There is a unit for visually impaired pupils at a local primary school and liaison between the two is very good, allowing smooth transfer between primary and secondary

education. There are also good links with further education colleges, which have suitable facilities. The head of the unit provides outstanding leadership and management in ensuring the smooth running of the unit, providing skilled technical advice and in providing training for teachers and other staff in the school.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	175
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	66

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	29	78	56	6	0	0
Percentage	3.4	16.6	44.6	32	3.4	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	1105
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	131

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	24
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	171

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	108	115	223

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	60	75	74
	Girls	93	89	85
	Total	153	164	159
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	69 (59)	74 (69)	71 (65)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (12)	43 (38)	28 (27)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	62	80	78
	Girls	95	97	81
	Total	157	177	159
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (76)	79 (88)	71 (59)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (35)	51 (47)	33 (33)
	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	105	91	196

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	39	102	104
	Girls	47	86	90
	Total	86	188	194
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	44 (51)	96 (98)	99 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results	GCSE point score
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Average point score per pupil	School	36.9 (38.0)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	1099
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	558

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	21.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	13.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	18.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	90	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	2 692 706
Total expenditure	2 614 587
Expenditure per pupil	2 412
Balance brought forward from previous year	(140 790)
Balance carried forward to next year	(62 671)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1105
Number of questionnaires returned	249

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	55	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	50	5	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	53	12	3	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	55	16	9	3
The teaching is good.	30	61	5	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	49	19	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	39	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	4	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	50	13	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	38	50	3	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	55	6	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	44	14	5	12

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents were concerned about the effect of staff absence, and the difficulties in finding suitably qualified and experienced supply teachers, on pupils' progress. The inspection team is aware that there have been such problems in previous years, but the school currently has appropriate arrangements for ensuring that pupils are satisfactorily taught when the regular teacher is absent.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Lower attaining Year 7 pupils in the “catch up” groups make good progress.
- The department has made good use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy to improve the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- The staffing of the department is now more stable than it has been for some time.
- The head of department has a good vision of how to raise standards further and she is well supported by her colleagues.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of the teaching is inconsistent and there are occasional unsatisfactory lessons.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some pupils make it difficult for others to concentrate on their learning in a few lessons.
- The department does not make enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

111. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, results were in line with the national average for all schools and the average for similar schools. Girls gained better results than boys. Results have fluctuated in recent years, with results in 2000 being below the national average and the results obtained in 2001 being the best in five years. Results in 2001 were similar to those for mathematics and science.

112. In 2001, the GCSE points score in English was below the national average and in English literature it was slightly below the national average. Girls did better than boys, reflecting the situation nationally. In English, results have fallen over the past three years. In English literature they remained steady between 1999 and 2000, when they were in line with the national average. In 2001 they dropped to just below it. Results in English were below the school's average for all subjects and results for English literature were broadly average for this school.

113. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that the standards in Year 9 reflect those indicated by last year's test results. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11, standards in English are below average, whilst in English literature they are now in line with the national average. When pupils' earlier attainment is taken into account, the achievement of pupils by the end of Year 11 is now satisfactory, although there was some under-achievement in the 2001 GCSE examinations. The improvement has taken place largely because the staffing situation in the department is now more stable. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 8 to 11 make progress at the same rate as other pupils. Some pupils with special educational needs in Year 7 follow a programme of work based upon the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy. This programme is effectively taught and those pupils make good progress.

114. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils are confident speakers, who are willing to participate fully in whole class and group discussion. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 discussion on class differences, which had been sparked off by a study of GB Shaw's "Pygmalion". Pupils spoke fluently, listened to each other and spoke in turns. Lower and middle attaining pupils express themselves briefly and possess limited vocabularies. By the

end of Year 11, higher attaining pupils go on to argue more persuasively and to challenge each other's views, as was seen, for example, in a Year 10 class which discussed racist attitudes, emerging from a study of George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant". However, many middle and lower attaining pupils assert ideas rather than argue a case and are sometimes reluctant to provide fuller explanations when asked to do so. They also tend to rely heavily upon colloquialisms and sometimes confuse their tenses. Higher and middle attaining pupils listen carefully in class. Lower attaining pupils frequently have short attention spans and instructions often need to be repeated.

115. By the end of Year 9, pupils have read novels and plays that are appropriate for their age groups. Higher attainers read aloud with fluency and good understanding, though their ability to project their voices or to read with expression is less developed than might be expected. Middle attaining pupils read in a slow and deliberate fashion but have a satisfactory level of understanding. Lower attaining pupils are hesitant, struggle to recognise common words and some still find it difficult to read independently. By the end of Year 11 pupils go on to read more complex literature. In this context, high and middle attainers examine social and personal issues in some depth, as was seen when a Year 11 class responded to "An Evil Cradling" by Brian Keenan. Higher attaining pupils are also able to make comparisons between different writers, as was seen, for example, when Year 11 pupils wrote clearly and well on how John Donne and Andrew Marvell wrote about love. Lower attaining pupils express little interest in reading and their understanding is often confined to the gist of what they have read, rather than engaging directly with the written word itself.

116. By the end of Year 9, pupils write in a variety of styles, including narratives, descriptions, play-scripts, diaries and reports. Since the introduction of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy, pupils have become more aware of the terms used to describe language, as was seen in Year 8 lessons on prefixes and suffices. By the end of Year 11 pupils go on to extend the scope of their writing to include, for example, detailed work on media topics. Good quality, full, well-structured work was seen on the theme of homelessness. Many pupils write at length on autobiographical and narrative topics. However, the work of many middle and lower attaining pupils is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

117. Pupils' skills in using ICT are below the level expected nationally for their age. The opportunities for pupils to practise these skills vary across the different classes and are restricted in scope.

118. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. Examples of good teaching, and a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, were also seen. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. When teaching includes a variety of activities, and the pace is brisk, pupils participate fully in the lesson, concentrate well and learn quickly. A number of such lessons were seen. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, lower attaining pupils studied a number of short passages carefully and, in response to skilful questioning by the teacher, learnt how to extract information from them. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils moved rapidly from considering the conventions of the fairy tale, to working in groups to find the similarities between well-known tales to then writing their own modern versions. Pupils clearly enjoyed the work and produced imaginative and entertaining responses. When teachers possess particularly good subject knowledge, as was seen in the teaching of Shakespeare from Year 8 upwards, pupils learn the appropriate terms to describe techniques in drama and are inspired to find out more about the writer. A good understanding of the course requirements leads to effective, relevant planning and this in turn leads to purposeful lessons in which pupils can feel confident. This is evident in Years 7 and 8, where most teachers have been quick to recognise the advantages of teaching literacy outlined in the National Strategy, including, for example, starter activities at the beginning of lessons. When

the challenge of the work is closely matched to pupils' prior attainment, as it is in the "catch up" classes in Year 7, pupils make rapid progress. Whilst there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking, much of it is good and provides pupils with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.

119. When teaching is unsatisfactory or less effective, teachers do not plan their lessons to include a sufficient variety of activities to engage the interest and involvement of pupils. In some lessons, the learning activities lost their momentum and this resulted in pupils becoming bored and behaving inappropriately. On occasions, teachers did not successfully check unacceptable behaviour. In other lessons, particularly on literary topics, pupils had insufficient opportunities to consolidate their understanding and to develop the vocabulary and style necessary for effective communication. Support assistants are not always effectively deployed and this means that opportunities to enrich and enliven pupils' learning are lost.

120. Overall, pupils have a satisfactory attitude towards their studies and wish to learn. A number are hard working and display good attitudes towards their work. Such pupils co-operate well with each other and their teachers and generally are respectful of other people. This can create a pleasant and productive atmosphere, as was seen in a Year 11 lesson when pupils were preparing a speech they were to deliver to other pupils later in the week. However, in a minority of lessons a small number of pupils adopt unsatisfactory or poor attitudes, are unwilling to co-operate and their behaviour is disruptive. This means their progress is unsatisfactory and, on occasions, it also has an adverse impact upon other pupils' learning.

121. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The department's staffing difficulties over the past few years have affected examination results and GCSE results in 2001 were not as good as those reported in the previous inspection report. These difficulties have been resolved and standards are rising again. Marking is now broadly consistent and the department now has a clear action plan.

122. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. There have been recent improvements to the curriculum for Years 7 to 11 based upon the National Strategy for literacy and the curriculum is now good, being both broad and balanced. In particular, the provision made for lower attaining pupils in Year 7 is especially relevant to their needs. However, the department has not yet been successful in ensuring that all teaching is at least satisfactory. The head of department has a good vision of how to raise standards further and she is well supported by her colleagues.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and teachers have a strong commitment to raising standards of attainment.
- The department offers good extra-curricular opportunities to pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11, to meet the needs of individual pupils and to develop and extend their mathematical understanding.

Areas for improvement

- The department does not make enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning in mathematics.

123. When pupils enter the school, their attainment in mathematics is average in relation to national standards. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, the results were broadly in line with the national average for all schools and the average for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. There was no difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils' performance in mathematics was similar to that in English and science. Since the previous inspection, results have been broadly in line with national averages, except in 2000, when there was a dip in the results. In 2001, the overall results were better than those in any of the previous five years.

124. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in mathematics, was just above, but close to, the national average. Few pupils gained the highest grades of A* and A. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to G was above the national average, and included nearly every pupil in the year group. Girls and boys gained similar results. Pupils gained better results in mathematics than they did on average in their other subjects. The results were similar to those in the previous year and significantly better than those achieved in 1999.

125. During the inspection, the standards of work seen for pupils at the end of Year 9 are above average and better than those indicated by the 2001 test results. This continues the trend of rising standards over the past few years. Having entered the school with average test results, these pupils have made good progress in response to the overall good teaching, and curriculum organisation, both of which have a positive impact on their learning. Hence their achievement at the end of Year 9 is good, given their attainment on entry to the school. Springboard, a scheme for helping lower attaining pupils to catch up with the others, is successfully used in Years 7 and 8, to support pupils who have not achieved level 4 on entry to the school. In Year 9, sets have been established to extend those higher attaining pupils with the potential of achieving the highest level. These higher attaining pupils understand index notation and the product of primes. They are able to generate points and plot graphs of simple quadratic functions such as $y = (x + 1)^2$, including negative values of x . Lower attaining pupils in Year 9, enjoy responding to some excellent teaching as they explore and apply the language of transformation in their graphical work. These pupils are aware of the terminology of averages and are able correctly to determine the range, mean, median and mode of a series of numbers. Pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy skills throughout Years 9 to 11.

126. At the end of Year 11 pupils' standards of work seen during the inspection are above average for their age and better than those indicated by last year's GCSE results. This reflects the generally rising trend in standards over the last few years, apart from the 'levelling off' in 2001. Pupils respond to good teaching and extra-curricular opportunities, make good progress and achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. This is supported by the 'value-added' factors predicted by recent 'mock' examinations. Year 11 pupils, in their revision for the forthcoming examinations, use calculators competently as they determine the lengths of sides of triangles, and the size of angles, and show good understanding of Pythagoras' Theorem, and the sine, cosine and tangent rules. A totally blind pupil, given excellent support by a brailist, with pre-prepared three-dimensional material, made very good progress. Some middle attaining pupils experienced challenging but enjoyable work when using tree-diagrams and the AND/OR rule. Lower attaining pupils supported by very good teaching, very good classroom relationships and high expectations by the teacher, took pride in the presentation and accuracy of their work, as they calculated angles at a point, and in triangles. However, pupils' presentation of work varies. Diagrams and graphs should not be drawn in ink and appropriate use should be made of rulers when drawing diagrams.

127. Overall, in all year groups, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those with visual impairment and those who are gifted and talented, make good progress. Education support assistants give valuable support and are fully aware of the specific mathematical needs of individual pupils.

128. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups. The department is fortunate in that all its teachers are mathematicians, and a number are also members of the senior management team. There are occasional lessons, particularly in Years 9 and 11, where teaching is very good or excellent.

129. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Within their specialist area, mathematics teachers contribute well, not only to numeracy skills, but also to literacy skills. Their work involving the use of ICT requires further development. Teachers have very high expectations. This is shown in their teaching, the advice given to pupils, particularly when preparing for examination, and their persistent challenge in order to attain higher standards. Extra-curricular groups support these expectations, for Years 9, 10 and 11. Teachers make an impact on learning when they set precise objectives at the beginning of lessons and discuss outcomes in a review at the end. Overall, relationships are good. Good classroom management skills, especially with lower attaining pupils, and a planned, well-managed diversity of short activities, delivered at appropriate pace, support good learning. Literacy skills are emphasised by the display of key words in all classroom areas, or listing key words at the beginning of lessons and discussing them again at the end, or by a spelling test, in the mental warm-up session. At the end of many lessons, younger pupils look forward to competitive mental numeracy activities, such as Kung Fu or Buzz, before leaving the classroom.

130. Teachers' marking lacks consistency. The use of 'show-me' boards, and a show of hands after self-marking an exercise, are used to inform teachers of day-to-day progress. Teachers do not generally indicate to pupils, other than by scores in half-term tests, oral comment, and on occasions, written comment, any numbered or lettered grade assessment of the standard of their current work. Many pupils in Years 7 to 9, are unaware of their National Curriculum levels. There are variations in setting homework; it is not always set regularly and tasks are not always appropriately demanding. Specific examples of very good mathematical teaching practice, evident within certain lessons, are not shared sufficiently to enhance consistency across the department.

131. Overall, standards of behaviour are good. Pupils are mainly attentive throughout the sixty-minute lessons and in certain classes, mainly for higher attainers, there is an academic rigour throughout the whole of the lesson. In order to maintain good attitudes from pupils, heavy demands are frequently made on teachers' classroom management skills. Pupils do not always concentrate as well as they should in very large classes taught in crowded classrooms with inappropriately designed ventilation. Attitudes are seen to deteriorate in some classes when there is inappropriate work for the ability of the pupils, or an activity is prolonged or is too repetitive.

132. The department has sound leadership given by a relatively newly appointed member of staff, who is committed to raising standards within the department. Currently, the department is working together to produce updated tests for assessing pupils' attainment. The department does not have a departmental handbook, or schemes of work that are specific to the department, to assist with the identification of best practice and to highlight the best use of the school's resources, in particular those available for ICT. There are insufficient textbooks for older pupils to retain. For this reason, the consistently, high quality presentation in exercise books in all classes is important in order to assist pupils' revision. Reports to parents do not give enough precise information about pupils' attainment and progress, and what pupils need to do to reach a target.

133. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and lesson length has been shortened. GCSE results have remained broadly the same. However, in Year 9, the performance of boys and girls is now similar. Displays, including those of pupils' work, on corridors and in classrooms are relevant and of good standard. Currently, there is still a need to use rooms in various parts of the school. The management and use of teaching resources is very difficult when a part-time member of staff, and his classes, use eight different classrooms.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The development of skills in experiment and scientific enquiry is very good.
- Almost all pupils consistently achieve at least grade G in GCSE examinations.
- There is some very good and excellent teaching.
- Most pupils have a positive attitude to science and are keen to learn.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for development

- Lack of pace in some lessons leads to slow progress.
- The attitude and behaviour of a very small minority of pupils, mainly boys, disrupts their own learning and that of others.
- There is further work to be done in developing schemes of work and the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

134. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14 year olds, results were in line with the national average for all schools but below average compared with schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. Boys' results were not as good as girls'. Results in science were similar to those achieved in mathematics and English. Results have improved over the last two years following an earlier fall in standards, although the recent upward trend is below that seen nationally.

135. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is in line with the national average. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2001, the percentage of pupils reaching at least grade C was close to the national average. Girls achieve just above the average and boys just below. Significant numbers achieved the very high grades of A and A* but the proportion of those reaching grade C, particularly boys, was lower than to be expected from their prior attainment. For a number of years almost all pupils have reached at least grade G. There has generally been little change in performance over recent years and the performance of pupils in science has consistently been better than in their other GCSE subjects. However, the results in 2001 were markedly lower than in the previous four years. The department experienced staffing difficulties in the school year 2000 – 2001 and could not always find well qualified and experienced supply teachers to cover lessons. This led to problems in maintaining the quality of teaching and pupils' examination results suffered.

136. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is average overall. Between the ages of 11 and 14, pupils' development in scientific enquiry is well above expectations and a significant strength of the department. From Year 7 onwards, pupils learn how to plan experiments, predict outcomes and carry out practical work in a well-organised and thoughtful way. There is a wide range of attainment in other aspects of pupils' work in science. The work of the highest attaining pupils is well above national expectations. For example, in a lesson for Year 9 pupils on energy transfers, several were able to decide independently from first principles how to calculate the value for an energy change, given the definition of specific heat capacity. Pupils with lower prior attainment show weaker grasp of principles but many acquire good factual knowledge and most make and record accurately the results of their experiments.

137. The high standards in experimental and investigative science are maintained for older pupils of all levels of prior attainment. Some pupils reaching high standards in all other aspects of science also produce virtually faultless pieces of GCSE coursework. The standard of an investigation into the reaction between sodium thiosulphate and hydrochloric acid approached that to be expected in the sixth form. Pupils with lower attainment, although much weaker at planning and evaluating their experiments, show good skills in carrying out their investigations and in reporting their findings. There is a wide range of attainment at the age of 16 in the development of scientific knowledge and understanding. Pupils with attainment well above expectations show a secure understanding of, for example, chemical reactions and how collision theory underpins the results of experiments on rates of reaction. Pupils with lower attainment, when supported by their teachers can, for example, show how some species become extinct.

138. Pupils' work in science is supported by standards of scientific numeracy and literacy which are at least adequate and the recent focus on developing a wider use of learning styles for younger pupils is beginning to have a positive impact on their work. For example, a project for pupils in Year 7 to write a "postcard from another planet" was effective in focusing their ideas on physical conditions elsewhere in the solar system. Pupils are developing good skills in using computers for a range of purposes, notably for revision in Years 9 and 11 but networking difficulties have slowed down developments in data-logging.

139. Achievement is satisfactory overall by the ages of 14 and 16, and pupils gain appropriate test and examination results in relation to their earlier attainment. They achieve particularly well in scientific enquiry. By the age of 14, some pupils with high attainment do not achieve quite as well as they should in terms of their knowledge and understanding. Instability in staffing in recent years has been one contributory factor. In addition, some of the teaching in Year 8 does not cater for the wide range of attainment of pupils who are not grouped on the basis of their prior attainment in science. In consequence, some of the higher attaining pupils have not been sufficiently stretched. By the age of 16, higher attaining pupils, particularly girls, achieve well but there is underachievement by some boys in the middle of the range of attainment mainly due to poor attitudes to school. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Teachers know them well and give good support in lessons.

140. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Over half the lessons were good or better with occasional very good or excellent lessons. Only one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and manage them well. There is significant variation in the quality of the marking of pupils' work. The good practice of some teachers, in giving good feedback to pupils on the standard of their work, is not universally shared.

141. Where learning is good or better, the strong interaction between teacher and pupils maintains interest and concentration. In an excellent lesson on rates of reaction for low attaining pupils, a dynamic atmosphere was created from the outset by very high expectations, strongly focused questions and a constant interplay between theory and experiment which drove the lesson on at a cracking pace. The very good focus on experimental science provides good opportunities for independent learning. For example, pupils in Year 7 made good gains in learning about planning experiments in a lesson in which they had to design their own method for separating substances. Many lessons judged to be good or better have a secure structure within which pupils are led forward from previous lessons to new opportunities for gaining knowledge. Often there are also opportunities at the end of the lesson to review the gains in learning through a series of well-structured questions.

142. There are shortcomings in some lessons which are satisfactory in most respects. The pace of learning is sometimes slow because the range and type of activities does not engage pupils actively enough in the learning process and too much time is spent in copying notes from the board or from a book. In a few cases, this leads to restlessness and poor concentration and learning is consequently less effective. For example, in a lesson on adaptation and natural selection, filling in gaps in copied sentences provided only a slight challenge to most pupils. Opportunities are sometimes lost to involve pupils in their own learning. For example, in a lesson to demonstrate the properties of metals, experiments done by the teacher worked effectively enough but pupils were insufficiently active in noting down observations which would have given good opportunities for discussion of the outcomes.

143. The large majority of pupils arrive at science lessons ready to work and show a positive attitude to science. For example, pupils in Year 7 universally approve of the good opportunities they have to work together in practical work, which they carry out carefully and safely. Many pupils approaching GCSE examinations work hard to produce high quality coursework and extra revision classes put on after school for pupils in Years 9 and 11, by teachers working in their own time, are well attended. A very small minority of pupils, mainly boys, arrive at lessons with a poor attitude to work and, despite the best efforts of teachers, behave badly and attempt to disrupt their own learning and that of others.

144. Leadership and management are good. The science co-ordinator provides strong and effective leadership in the face of ongoing staffing difficulties. He shows a clear commitment

to raising standards. Priorities are clearly established annually from the detailed analysis of test and examination results and realistic action plans follow from each review. For example, the identification of a greater than expected proportion of grade D's in GCSE 2001 has resulted the careful tracking of the performance of pupils in the current Year 11. The use of a modular GCSE course and the development of a secure system for assessing and recording attainment both provide good information for teachers on pupils' progress.

145. Some good progress has been made on the monitoring of the work of the department but procedures are not yet sharp enough to bring the standard of all teaching into line with the best and to improve consistency in marking. The work in progress in reviewing schemes of work is beginning to have an impact on the development of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the use of ICT, although much remains to be done. There is a good spirit of mutual co-operation in the department and the two technicians give effective and cheerful support to its work.

146. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in teaching, use of ICT and in the monitoring of the work of the department. Standards have changed little. Good leadership and management are now established and so improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. The department is in a good position to move forward.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils make good progress during their time in school and achieve better examination results than might be expected in relation to their attainment when they arrive in Year 7.
- The creative and technical standards of work achieved in all craft areas are particularly good.
- The quality of the teaching is good.

Areas for improvement

- The department does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use computers creatively in the early years.
- The department's strategies for dealing with incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour, and overcoming pupils' tendency to chat, are not as effective as they should be.
- Facilities for displaying pupils' three-dimensional work are inadequate.

147. In the most recent GCSE examination in 2001, the number of pupils achieving grades A* to C was slightly above the national average, which was a clear improvement on previous years. Girls outperformed boys, reflecting the national pattern. Boys' attainment is improving and, in 2001, they achieved better results in art and design than they did on average in their other subjects.

148. The standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. Pupils arrive with very varied levels of ability and previous experience, and many have weak observational drawing skills. By Year 9, the majority of pupils are working at or above the level expected nationally and drawing is strong. Pupils acquire new craft skills, such as collage, and gain knowledge of a range of artists, such as the Cubists, by applying their method of incorporating different viewpoints in a composition. They develop creative and technical skills to a good standard in a well-planned programme of activities. Pupils are prompt to lessons, they enjoy art and design and most are keen to succeed. Apart from a minority, mainly boys, behaviour is good, even in very cramped conditions for the larger groups. All pupils are able to use computers for design work to a good technical standard but the present task does not promote creativity.

Pupils of all levels of attainment, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well by the end of Year 9 because teachers pay close attention to pupils' individual needs.

149. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average. Pupils start the GCSE course with a wide range of levels of attainment and the majority of pupils eventually achieve standards that are better than the national average. Achievement in relation to prior attainment is therefore good. Pupils' drawing skills are at least good and, for the higher attaining pupils, often excellent. Pupils use computers creatively to explore and make repeat patterns in the style of Escher. They develop these imaginative designs in prints which are of the highest quality. Their print expertise would be even broader if all equipment were available for use. Some pupils use word-processing to present their writing but they do not use their findings from Internet research to inform their own opinions. Pupils develop their two-dimensional portrait work into low-relief three-dimensional portraits of characters from famous paintings. This improves their painting skills and their knowledge of a range of art and design. They develop good ceramic skills because the teacher gives clear demonstrations of the correct processes and they demonstrate their technical knowledge in very well illustrated 'how to work with clay' notes. Sketchbook work shows flair and is often of above average quality and quantity. Much work initially relies on secondary source material but this is successfully developed in a creative way. While most pupils are attentive and work hard, a significant number of pupils, both boys and girls, are easily distracted from their work by a tendency to chat. For these pupils this results in superficial work of a standard below their potential. During the inspection there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

150. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are productive and well paced, as teachers set deadlines for the completion of tasks. Teachers know their subject very well and they are able to refer pupils to different artists, such as Monet, to develop colour work. They regularly demonstrate different craft processes to improve pupils' skills. They work hard to ensure pupils understand. For example, the patiently repeated explanation of how to use tracing paper to help in a design task resulted in a lower attaining pupil exclaiming: 'Now I understand!' All lessons are planned well and follow a well-considered scheme of work. Teachers have high expectations in both behaviour and artistic endeavours. Methods are suitably varied with a very effective use of exemplar work to set standards, but insufficient demands are made on pupils for extended answers to questions.

151. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use measurement, to scale up work and to learn basic perspective skills. Spatial skills are developed well. Key art and design words are displayed in all studios but these have yet to have full impact on pupils' accurate use of an art and design vocabulary. Pupils can identify the work of a range of different artists but knowledge of female artists is limited by a lack of suitable resources. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in very good display throughout the school but facilities to exhibit their three-dimensional work are inadequate. Visits to art galleries in Years 10 and 11 continue to be rare and this restricts pupils' awareness of both historical and contemporary art. The department successfully implements its policy of ensuring that all pupils have opportunities to participate in its programme, such as when pupils with visual impairment are fully integrated in the extra-curriculum sculpture activities.

152. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Leadership is good and the team has a clear commitment to achieving high standards. The focus on targets for individual pupils and improved tutorials are proving effective in raising standards. The innovative link with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park has provided a valuable and enriching experience. Examination results have significantly improved. Boys' performance has improved. Work with computers is now among the planned activities. Artists-in-residence have been introduced so that pupils in early years are able to undertake large-scale sculpture

work. Group work is now developed well in Year 8, with pupils making delightful mosaics for the school. Pupils have improved their painting skills by exploring how different artists use colour and employing these techniques, from watery wash to heavy impasto, in their own work. Art of other cultures, such as Celtic art or Indian architecture, now has a wider influence. The department provides an excellent induction project for primary pupils and is now part of a training programme for new art and design teachers.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very high expectations and demand much effort and good standards of work from pupils.
- There are high quality displays of pupils' work throughout the department, to set high standards in theory and practical work.
- Pupils' attainment and progress are individually tracked to ensure they reach their potential.
- The department has made very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are all very good.

Areas for improvement

- Some of the portfolios in Years 10 and 11, from boys especially, are not as good as they should be.
- The department does not make enough use of ICT in food studies to help with nutritional analysis and costing, and for letter formation to help pupils with special educational needs
- There is no technician for food and textiles, so teachers are over-burdened with technician tasks and have less time for preparing lessons.

153. Overall, in the 2001 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A* to C was close to the national average. Girls outperformed boys and the gap was bigger than that found nationally. Results at grades A* to G for both boys and girls were above the national average. There were differences in results between the material areas. In food, textiles and systems and control the percentages of A* to C grades were higher than those in resistant materials and graphic products. Pupils usually gain some of their best GCSE results in design and technology but the results were broadly average for the school in 2001.

154. Overall attainment is average in Year 9 and reflects good achievement from Year 7 to 9, as pupils enter school with limited experience in the subject. At the beginning of Year 7, they know little about food preparation and nutrition. At their former schools, most pupils did some sewing and created models from recycled materials, but had few opportunities to saw and shape wood or metal. Pupils usually drew what they made, but rarely designed something to fit a specific purpose.

155. As they progress through the school, pupils build up skills and knowledge by working on design and make projects in all the material areas. They work through course booklets that help them in all stages of manufacture and, by the time they are 14, they understand how to analyse a design brief, draw up a specification and make something to answer problems. They gain literacy skills by using the library and accessing information on CD-ROMs and the Internet when researching topics such as healthy eating, production lines, components and advertising. Pupils in Year 9 are currently devising recipes for a Mediterranean restaurant, creating steady hand games in timber, metal and acrylic that incorporate warning devices, collaborating with others to create a banner in textiles and designing logos for companies. In

all instances, the activities are challenging and the theory work that goes alongside the practical helps pupils to understand about, for example, nutrition, textiles, electronics and construction. Pupils control hand and power tools confidently and are careful when working. Practical skills are good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are encouraged to set themselves appropriate tasks so they finish their work to a good standard. The higher attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, are expected to design more complex items which require higher level practical skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand that desirable products stem from innovation and development and that honest evaluation is vital.

156. Attainment of pupils in Year 11 is above average and reflects good achievement over the two-year course. Standards have improved in the areas that were less successful in the 2001 GCSE examinations and are now closer to those shown by examination results in 2000. By the time they are 16, pupils know about the processes involved from first thoughts about making something to seeing final articles. They understand some of the financial and industrial implications for mass production. They know that research is important, but some pupils, mainly boys, tend just to collect pictures and do not fully assess the suitability of the products they investigate. Most pupils produce good quality pages in their portfolios, showing detailed drawings and good use of colour but a few of the lower attaining pupils find drawing difficult and their lettering on page headings is weak. Many of the portfolios seen during the inspection contain work that is well above average, but some of the boys lose momentum in their work, omit some stages and consequently get lower marks for coursework than they should. Once started on practical tasks, pupils work sensibly and with determination. They spot errors in manufacture and refine their work successfully. For example, one girl in Year 11, making a xylophone, has experimented in making the bars out of various materials to get the best sounds and consulted the music department about resonance. Pupils mark and measure their work carefully, to gain accuracy in fit and consistency. The quality of practical work is above average, especially in food studies, textiles and electronics. Most pupils cope especially well with computer-controlled equipment, such as sewing machines and the milling machine. Pupils who use computers regularly show skill in word processing and good general layout and research. However, pupils are relatively unskilled in using computers for recipe analysis and costing.

157. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. They enter the rooms cheerfully and know that they are expected to work hard in all the technology areas. They listen to instruction, enjoy watching demonstrations and are quick to settle to work. Concentration levels are high. The set tasks make pupils think and most of them rise to the challenges. They persevere with theory and many, including the lower attaining pupils, gain good marks, not just for effort, but also for high quality work. Behaviour is mostly good. There are a few boys who occasionally misbehave in lessons, but they accept reprimands and eventually return to task. Most pupils are polite to the teachers and are very keen to contribute in question and answer sessions. Pupils get on very well together and the more confident pupils help each other if the teacher is busy. During the inspection many pupils were happy to explain to the inspector what they were doing and were confident and proud to show their work.

158. The quality of teaching is good across all year groups and brings about good quality learning. During the inspection, most lessons were good or very good, with an occasional excellent lesson. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The greatest strength in the teaching stems from the very high expectations which teachers have of pupils. Teachers are highly skilled, demonstrate competently and select high quality work to show pupils the standards achievable. Teachers have worked hard to compile course booklets for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The booklets help to make pupils more independent and ensure that they keep all their work in logical order. Teachers can track where pupils are omitting sections or having difficulties,

and marks and comments on their work inform pupils where improvements can be made. Some of the booklets are available in large print for partially sighted pupils. Planning and preparation are thorough and each module of work ensures that pupils learn practical skills, gain knowledge and improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Most teachers in the department are confident in using ICT and plan activities whereby pupils extend and practise their skills in using computers. ICT, however, is not used as often as it should be, by pupils who have low literacy skills and poor handwriting in Years 10 and 11. The support for pupils in practical sessions is good, as they gain help from close attention by teachers, special needs assistants and the highly skilled technician. At the end of sessions, teachers question pupils about what they have learned and encourage them to ask questions to ensure they know about the next stages. Pupils who are having difficulty with theory work in Years 10 and 11 are not given enough homework.

159. The new head of department provides very good leadership and the department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved, especially in investigation work and in the quality of graphics. The use of ICT has been extended to include computer-aided designing. The scheme of work now includes some culturally linked modules such as the Oriental project in textiles and references to the paintings of famous artists such as Hobbema in lessons about perspective. The quality of teaching has improved. Assessment is greatly improved, and the results of assessments are used to determine the department targets for development. The workrooms are open at all times so that pupils can do extra work in free time, supported by the department staff. There is no technician for food and textiles, which means that teachers have to spend valuable lesson preparation time doing technician duties.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- There is good use of the local area for teaching and pupils' research.
- The management of behaviour in classrooms is good.
- The department makes a good contribution to the improvement of pupils' literacy skills.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and well motivated.

Areas for improvement

- Some boys under-achieved in 2001 GCSE examinations.
- The department does not make sufficient use of ICT in teaching.
- The department does not make enough use of GCSE grades and National Curriculum levels when assessing pupils' work.
- There are insufficient textbooks.

160. In 1999 and 2000, GCSE results at grades A* to C were above national averages but in 2001 they were below average. Girls achieved much better GCSE results than boys in 2001. Girls gained better results in geography than they did on average in their other subjects, whereas boys' results in geography were below their average across the subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to G in the 2001 examinations was below average. Although, since 1997, GCSE results in geography have been rising, the rise has been below the national trend.

161. In the current Years 9 and 11, pupils' standards in geography are average. They have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of current and recent topics. The quality of fieldwork projects, especially from pupils in Years 10 and 11, is good, indicating their ability to effectively collect and analyse information, to test hypotheses and to communicate their findings clearly using written or graphical techniques. These good aspects of pupils' skills are the result of the particularly effective use that the department makes of the local environment to teach geographical skills and concepts.

162. Pupils join the school with average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 9, and in the current Year 11, pupils also reach average standards, so that their achievement is satisfactory. However, within this overall judgement of satisfactory achievement, there are some variations. Higher attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, do better in geography than in other subjects, whilst lower attaining pupils do less well. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils' below average results reflected a similar situation with the same pupils at the end of Year 9, so their achievement in Years 10 and 11 was also broadly satisfactory. There is, however, a measure of underachievement in geography, particularly by lower attaining boys. Some pupils, especially boys, do not always transfer the good work ethic seen in class into their homework; there are gaps in their written work and work that is incomplete. As a result, their attainment is restricted and achievement reduced.

163. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. However, the department relies too much on the outcomes of work and additional individual support in lessons and does not plan to incorporate tasks, or to use teaching materials, that are suited to the needs of these pupils as often as it should.

164. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and often good in individual lessons. Lessons are well planned, though some of the planned lessons in Years 7 and 8 lack specific consideration for the needs of pupils of differing prior attainment. The purpose of the lesson is made clear to pupils at the start and summaries of achievement and knowledge gained feature at the end of most lessons. The pace of teaching is often good with an emphasis on improving literacy to enable pupils to express ideas clearly and accurately in written form. Teachers are particularly effective in their efforts to improve geographical skills, and pupils' skills in extended writing, through investigative project work in the local area. There is an emphasis on improving geographical skills, for example, the use of atlases, effective mapwork in Year 7 and a lesson in Year 8 that developed pupils' skills of graph drawing and analysis as a background to an understanding of the climate of Kenya. Teachers make good links between work in geography and that in other subject departments. They make particularly effective use of individual case studies to enhance pupils' understanding. Pupils' work is conscientiously marked and incorporates comments that help pupils to know how to improve but often lacks grades that are linked to the levels of the National Curriculum or to GCSE grades as suggested by the last inspection report. Sometimes teachers spend too much time in lessons talking to pupils who then become inattentive and the quality of their learning is reduced.

165. Teachers use a variety of strategies to keep pupils motivated in lessons and manage the behaviour of pupils so that they are fully occupied for the full length of the lesson. This was particularly the case in a Year 10 lesson on the movement of tectonic plates and resulting volcanoes which used topic cards, a poster, a model and a short videotape extract to explain the physical processes involved. In a Year 7 lesson on Italy, a challenging question and answer session by the teacher, pupils working together effectively in pairs and sharing information, an emphasis on vocabulary and writing to link cause and effect and a task to extract information from photographs in the textbook, all combined to give pupils a clear understanding of population distribution.

166. The department has satisfactory procedures to monitor the work of pupils and, in particular, a system of review for pupils who are not doing as well as they should. Assessment includes a measure of self-assessment by pupils but this is not sufficiently focused on raising geographical attainment. Levels of performance are well reviewed and the department recognises that lower attaining pupils are not doing as well as they could. Schemes of work are helpful in suggesting strategies for teaching and assessment but do not incorporate ideas for providing appropriate tasks for pupils with special educational needs or for supporting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Development planning is short term and, while recognising the need to improve levels of attainment, is not adequately focused on the urgent need to improve the use made of ICT as an aid to learning, to increase the supply of textbooks to prevent sharing by two or more pupils in lessons and to increase the use of textbooks for homework.

167. The department has made satisfactory progress in responding to the concerns expressed in the previous inspection report. Examination results have improved, the quality of teaching is better than it was at that time and literacy has become a focus of the work in geography. Behaviour in lessons has improved. There are more effective measures to mark and assess the progress of pupils and there is some, but not sufficient, improvement in the use of ICT in teaching and learning. The attainment of lower attaining boys remains a significant concern and marking and assessment are not yet sufficiently well linked to GCSE grades or the levels of attainment of the National Curriculum.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good; teachers present the subject with enthusiasm and clarity.
- Good leadership, supportive teamwork and opportunities for professional development make a good contribution to raising standards.
- Assessment procedures and monitoring of progress are very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Attractive displays of pupils' work produce a stimulating subject environment in the history rooms.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not use enough resources and exercises to extend higher attaining pupils in the mixed ability classes.
- The department does not make enough use of ICT in lessons to support learning in the subject.

168. In 2001, the GCSE results in history were below the national average. They were higher than in 1999 but below the best year, 2000, when pupils achieved the national average in the subject. Girls did slightly better than boys, but the margin was less than that found nationally. Pupils' results in history matched their average results across all the subjects they took.

169. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is around the national average by age 14. Pupils enter the school with varied, and often limited, subject skills and knowledge, make good progress over Years 7 to 9 and achieve well at the end of Year 9. The wider range of assessment tasks introduced in Year 9 this year is enabling more middle attaining pupils to demonstrate achievement of the historical skills and understanding expected by the end of Year 9. For example, pupils show their knowledge and understanding of major changes in the period 1750-1900 in diagrammatic form, identifying the links between changes in different sectors of the economy. They use census and local records well to trace the growth of a local mining village. Higher attaining pupils have developed a critical approach to the use of historical sources, commenting accurately on the usefulness and reliability of a diary of life in the 18th century. Lower attaining pupils were less precise in their use of evidence in their accounts of conditions in the early factories.

170. In Year 9, pupils show good understanding of propaganda in their analysis of World War 1 recruiting posters and in their preparation of Austrian and Serbian accounts of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. These skills need developing further to include more analysis of different historical interpretations of people and events. Most pupils have a good understanding of the causes of the war, although lower attaining pupils find the diplomacy aspect difficult to understand. Some pupils had difficulty finding out information for themselves about Kitchener and need more practice using reference books and the Internet.

171. Teachers' emphasis on developing literacy is having a noticeable effect on pupils' writing in Years 7 to 9. Year 7 pupils are carefully taught how to plan an essay and have produced interesting work on growing up in a different generation, using interviews with relatives. Year 8 pupils made good use of supportive frameworks to help them plan their essays on the long and short term causes of the English Civil War. The groups of pupils interviewed about their studies in Years 7 and 8 showed the same keenness for their work as Year 9 pupils did for the lessons on the Great War. Pupils behave well in class and concentrate on their work.

172. In Year 11, attainment in work seen is around the national average and better than that indicated by the 2001 GCSE results. Pupils make good progress in lessons and in their homework but their performance in the mock examinations was just satisfactory, when

compared with their prior attainment in Year 9. Hence their achievement at the end of Year 11 is broadly satisfactory, despite good teaching and learning. All the necessary support and revision classes are available to them but lower attaining pupils find memorising and recalling relevant information demanding. Pupils develop good note-taking skills, helped by close monitoring and comments from their teachers. They make good use of historical sources and evaluate their usefulness and reliability for an enquiry. Regular practice of examination questions is improving their essay technique. Constructive feedback on timed essays in one lesson helped pupils understand what is needed to gain high marks. Nevertheless, some middle attaining pupils misjudge the timing of their answers and leave unfinished the high scoring evaluation part of the question. A recent visit to a revision conference has consolidated, in an entertaining way, the examination techniques they have practised in class. In general, pupils have a serious attitude to their work, applying themselves studiously to tasks. Lower attaining pupils learn well through a stepped series of exercises in class, but weak literacy limits their attainment in examinations.

173. The quality of teaching and learning is good in most lessons and across all year groups. During the week of the inspection only one class was being taught history in Years 7 and 8, as geography units were being studied in humanities. Consequently, no non-specialists were seen teaching history. Scrutiny of pupils' files indicates that the quality of history teaching is consistent across the humanities team in Years 7 to 9. In Years 9 to 11, the history specialists put the subject across in an enthusiastic way and are skilful exponents of the art of questioning, involving pupils in class discussion. Lessons are well planned for progression from basic to more difficult exercises. Occasionally the aim of the lesson is not entirely clear and a sharper focus on lesson objectives, stated at the outset, would make learning clearer for pupils. Teachers manage their classes well and enjoy good working relationships with pupils, giving extra help to individuals who need it. More capable pupils in broad ability classes are not always given sufficiently challenging materials and exercises that will stretch them. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is particularly good, especially the close monitoring of notes on examination courses - even annotating them - and giving clear guidance for improvement. Pupils learn well as a result of targeted teaching of the key subject and literacy skills.

174. The leadership and management of the department are good. The department's involvement in a national project on teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 has given teachers the opportunity for professional development, which they have used to good effect to develop their schemes of work and assessments. The head of department is managing this initiative well with the support of her colleagues and the commitment to improvement that is evident across the humanities team. Along with improved assessment procedures, they have developed a good system for identifying underachievement and providing counselling for pupils to raise their performance. In addition, teachers are enriching the curriculum through fieldwork in Years 8 and 10, a joint project on the Holocaust with religious education in Year 9, and a revision conference plus extra lessons in Year 11. Use of ICT is still not embedded in the teaching programmes, except in Year 7.

175. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, moving forward in most areas of its work, except for the use of ICT. GCSE results have shown some improvement but the real breakthrough is being prepared in the thorough teaching of subject skills and literacy skills that is now established practice in Years 7 to 9, and evident in the improved standards of Year 9 pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have technical expertise and a strong commitment to their work.
- The department has prepared very good materials to develop pupils' skills in ICT.
- The school has made very good progress in increasing the resources for ICT since the previous inspection.
- The department is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Tasks set in ICT lessons often do not match the needs of all pupils in the group and are not always relevant to pupils' work in other subjects.
- The level of resources is still not sufficient for all teachers to have enough access to computers to support teaching and learning in their subjects
- Teachers have not had enough training to ensure that they all feel confident and competent to use ICT in their teaching
- The level of technician support for ICT is insufficient to meet the needs of the school.
- The accommodation for ICT is currently inadequate.
- Subject departments do not yet all identify appropriate opportunities, within their schemes of work, to use ICT to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils in the current Year 11 are not receiving their full entitlement to the ICT programmes of study.

176. GNVQ examination courses have been introduced for the current Year 10 pupils and this is the first time that pupils in the school have followed a course leading to a recognised qualification in ICT. Hence there are no examination results in the subject.

177. By the end of Year 9, standards in ICT match the levels expected for pupils at the age of 14. Skills in the use of databases and spreadsheets are developed to an appropriate level by the end of Year 7, where pupils construct appropriate questionnaires, sort data using several criteria, draw a range of graphs and draw appropriate conclusions from the data. In Year 8, pupils have a very good understanding of control using 'flowol'. In one lesson they applied their theoretical knowledge successfully in operating the flashing lights for a belisha beacon on a computer simulation. Pupils have opportunities to develop their basic skills further in Years 8 and 9.

178. Standards of work in Year 11 are below average for pupils at the age of 16, mainly because pupils in this year group have not received their full entitlement to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for ICT. This weakness in pupils' overall ICT experience has been overcome for Year 10 and subsequent year groups. Pupils produce good examples of animated presentations, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Slides contain text and pictures and are usually effectively enhanced with animation effects. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 progress to using more sophisticated database software and more complex spreadsheet functions.

179. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of levels of skill in using ICT but, overall, their attainment at the beginning of Year 7 is average. Similarly, at the end of Year 9 their standards in ICT are average for their age. They are doing as well as might be expected in Years 7 to 9 and so their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. However, pupils in Year 11 have skills in ICT that are below average and their achievement is unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in any year.

180. Pupils are not always well motivated in lessons where ICT is used. In part, this is because the nature of the tasks set does not match the needs of all pupils. Most pupils are keen to learn and usually apply themselves diligently. However a few pupils lack confidence in using ICT, 'switch off' and do not attempt the tasks. Occasionally, the behaviour of these few pupils is unsatisfactory and disrupts the learning of others in the class. Most pupils co-operate effectively when required and there are many examples of pupils supporting each other in all years. In the Year 8 lesson on control using 'flowol', pupils responded well to the task and had clear enjoyment and a sense of success when they were all able to instruct the computer to produce a sequence of flashing lights.

181. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection with the appointment of specialist teachers. Teachers' ICT skills and knowledge is generally good and always at least sufficient for the work being undertaken. In ICT lessons, there is an over-emphasis on teaching specific skills and limited opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in contexts that are relevant to their work in other subjects. Individual lessons are planned in great detail and some very useful worksheets and other materials have been produced. However, whilst the tasks set match the needs of many pupils, there are weaknesses in ensuring that the tasks are appropriate for all pupils and this affects the progress that some pupils, usually the highest and lowest attainers, make in lessons and their eventual achievement. The support provided by teachers for individual pupils who are finding things difficult, is good in all lessons. This is particularly significant in Year 7 where some pupils start from a low level of ICT capability, in Year 11 where pupils have had very limited access to ICT in their time in the school and for pupils who have special educational needs. In a Year 9 lesson there was efficient use of time when the teacher gathered together a group of pupils who were struggling with the task to help them as a group; this allowed those who did understand the task to get on with their work at their own pace. On this occasion the pace of learning improved dramatically from this point onwards.

182. Teachers give good feedback to pupils as they are working with them in lessons. However, their marking of ICT work does not give pupils sufficient information about the standards they are reaching. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing ICT capability throughout Years 7 to 9. However, there is not enough use of marking, and assessment in general, to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.

183. The developing, planned programme for using ICT within the subjects of the curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection. Some subjects are now providing a much better range of experiences for pupils in all years. Effective use is made of computers within modern foreign languages where Year 8 pupils produce 'Welcome to Wakefield' brochures in French and older pupils use ICT effectively to edit and refine coursework. The use of ICT is a strength in design and technology where pupils have access to a good range of appropriate software. Most other departments, particularly English, mathematics, geography and history, do not make enough use of ICT and need to expand their use further as resources continue to improve. Computers are used for word processing and desktop publishing in several subjects. However, there is a wide variation in the standards demanded by teachers in other subjects when pupils use word processing. The

school's programme of professional development in the use of ICT in the curriculum has had limited impact. Few teachers have received the in-service training available under funding provided by the New Opportunities Fund. As a result not all teachers across the school feel confident or have the expertise to feel competent in using ICT within their lessons.

184. The department is well managed. The head of department has established a strong team spirit with the other teachers of the subject, all of whom have entered the school since his appointment. He has introduced new courses in all years. He has overseen an increase in the school's computing network, from a very poor situation at the time of the last inspection. Much remains to be done, particularly in introducing newer technologies such as broadband connection, electronic whiteboards and video-conferencing. The time is now appropriate in the development of ICT within the school to switch the focus from teaching ICT skills to applying the skills in relevant contexts across all subjects.

185. The number and quality of the computers in the school has improved significantly since the last inspection but the number is still below the average for a school of this size. The school is constantly vigilant in trying to ensure that pupils do not access undesirable materials on the Internet. Technical support is limited for the department. Full-time technician support would assist those teachers who currently lack confidence in using ICT and would enable increased access by pupils to computers at lunchtimes. At the time of the inspection pupils had very limited access to computers at lunchtimes and after school. Since the last inspection the number of computer rooms has increased. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because of the layout of machines within two of the rooms, which makes it difficult for pupils to see the whiteboard and for the teachers to observe all machines from any one point in the rooms. The ventilation in all three rooms is inadequate and does not enable pupils to work in comfort. The planned changes for the accommodation for ICT due to be implemented in September 2002 will tackle these issues.

186. At the time of the previous inspection, the various aspects of ICT were a key issue. In fact, there was very little ICT equipment and, therefore, almost no teaching in the subject. The school has made very good progress in a relatively short period of time. The issues identified in the last report have been tackled with enthusiasm and energy. Recently there have been significant improvements in ICT resources as well as in the planning for, management of, and co-ordination of ICT provision. However, the task that faced the school, given the shortage of available funds, was enormous. Hence, despite the very good progress that has been made, ICT remains an important issue for the school.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards have risen quickly for pupils in all year groups, in the last twelve months.
- The quality of teaching is good
- Leadership and management of the subject are now very good.
- The department has very good procedures for assessing students' work.
- Pupils studying German in Year 10 make very good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' attainment is still not as high as it could be, especially among boys.
- The quality of written work, is not as good as other aspects of pupils' attainment, especially for high attaining pupils.
- The department does not have sufficiently effective strategies to deal with incidents of poor behaviour in the occasional unsatisfactory lesson.
- Class sizes are too large, especially in upper sets in Years 10 and 11.

187. Results at grades A* to C in the 2001 GCSE examinations in French broadly matched the national average. Results at A* to G were also average. Results for boys were lower than those for girls. No pupils were entered for German in 2001. Results have improved significantly since the last inspection and the results in 2001 showed a particularly encouraging rise since the previous year.

188. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards are broadly average in Year 9 and in Year 11. Changes in teaching methods and in the curriculum are having a positive impact on standards and pupils are achieving well. Boys still do not achieve as well as girls but the gap is narrowing. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve in line with their peers. Pupils from the unit for visually impaired pupils achieve very well. There are few differences across the four aspects of the subject but writing is the skill that is marginally the weakest.

189. Pupils in Year 9 answer questions about such topics as sports and pastimes, their homes, their families and what there is to do in the local area. They generally listen carefully to the teacher, to cassette tapes and to other pupils when they are speaking. They understand instructions from the teacher in the language being taught. There is a minority of pupils who find concentration for any length of time difficult. Pupils answer questions in the language being taught and they try hard with pronunciation. In Year 9, most pupils carry out conversations with two or three exchanges and they are beginning to use a range of tenses. They discuss their likes and dislikes in food and drink and can explain the main features of healthy eating. Pupils develop their reading skills mainly through reading textbooks and worksheets to find the answers to questions. Most pupils read and understand simple authentic texts and use language dictionaries by the end of Year 9. In their written work a majority write short paragraphs from memory. There are good examples of extended writing using a range of styles and tenses, but opportunities for extended writing are more limited than they could be and this restricts attainment in writing, especially for higher attaining pupils. Pupils' written work is often adversely affected by basic errors in spelling and grammar.

190. In Year 11, pupils build on their understanding of the topics covered in earlier years in preparation for GCSE examinations and they add others such as travel, their likes and dislikes in school, illness and their thoughts about possible future jobs and careers. Most pupils are able to carry out conversations with others about going shopping and buying clothes, for example. A minority of higher attaining pupils show good development of writing skills and produce good work on where they went on holiday and what they did. Most pupils do not write at this level and often make basic errors in spelling and grammatical errors such as wrong verb endings and agreement of adjectives. In general pupils do not write with a range of styles to produce letters, poems, accounts or stories. The small number of higher attaining pupils who are studying German in Year 10 are achieving very well and attaining very good standards.

191. In many lessons there is work on spelling, punctuation and grammar and the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy development. Pupils use basic arithmetic to do calculations and use tables and graphs to present the results of surveys they have carried out. This makes a good contribution to numeracy development. There is good use of ICT to produce spreadsheets, to refine and edit work, and to produce pictorial and written pieces of work for display. Older pupils make good use of ICT for research as part of their coursework.

192. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching is good or better in just over half the lessons seen. Teaching was reported as "sound", with a significant minority of lessons being unsatisfactory, at the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. There are, however, still occasional unsatisfactory lessons. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are usually satisfactory but there is a significant minority of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory. Where this is the case, and the teacher is unable to maintain satisfactory control, the progress of the majority of the class is affected as a result. Where pupils work together in groups, relationships are good. Pupils of all ethnic groups and those who are visually impaired work well together. Usually teachers control their pupils well and this is achieved with patience and with good humour. Teachers' and pupils' use of the language being taught is inconsistent. In some lessons nearly all of the work is in the foreign language but, in others, the teacher lapses into English too often for the lesson to be fully effective. In a number of lessons the teacher does not provide a wide range of work to suit the needs of the range of attainment found in classes. These are the main features of teaching that is satisfactory rather than good or better. Homework is regularly set and enables pupils to consolidate and extend their learning. Where teaching is at its best, lessons are carefully planned to provide a range of challenging work and the teaching methods used give very good variety so that pupils are kept both busy and interested. This was seen in a Year 10 French lesson, for example, where the teacher made very good use of the overhead projector and flashcards to teach some new vocabulary. This was reinforced by a number of reinforcement and repetition activities, conducted at brisk pace, which ensured strong learning. Teaching for the small group of pupils who are studying German in Year 10 is of consistently high quality.

193. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. There is good provision for social development through taking turns and working together. School trips each year provide a strong social and cultural dimension. The curriculum and scheme of work have been changed considerably to provide more appropriate courses. This has been an important factor in raising standards especially for GCSE. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Very large class sizes restrict teaching opportunities. It is almost impossible to use role-plays as a teaching method, for example. Assessment was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. There are now very good procedures in place for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress. Challenging but attainable targets are set for this year's GCSE results. Resources, which were inadequate at the time of the last inspection, have improved but are still unsatisfactory. There are still insufficient

textbooks for a set to be in each classroom and time is wasted carrying books from one place to another and in arranging who will use them. A team of hard working teachers is in place and they have shown a high level of commitment in writing new schemes of work and in improving teaching. The recently appointed head of department has shown very good leadership and management in setting up the necessary changes and in establishing clear priorities for development. The subject has made very good progress since the last inspection and particularly during the last twelve months. However, the quality of the current leadership and management, and the progress the department has made, have yet to be fully reflected in pupils' attainment and examination results because of weaknesses in pupils' earlier experience and attainment.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, especially the management of pupils, pace, challenge and expectations.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- The department does not make enough use of ICT, particularly computer-aided work in musical composition.
- Take-up rates for GCSE music are low for the size of the school.

194. In the 2001 GCSE music examination all pupils were successful, the majority gaining A*-C grades. The small number of pupils taking music in the year group makes comparisons with national averages inappropriate. Results compare very favourably with other subjects in the school. All pupils achieved well in relation to their earlier attainment in the subject, irrespective of gender.

195. Pupils' attainment in Year 9 is average. Pupils attain appropriate standards in listening and appraising skills, vocal and instrumental performance, and knowledge of appropriate musical terminology. Skills in composition work are sometimes limited in scope. In effective work on Caribbean music in Year 8 pupils could confidently maintain their instrumental parts in a multi-layered, rhythmic class performance. In a Year 9 class comparing features of contemporary club music with Indonesian gamelan, pupils displayed good listening skills, being able to articulate their ideas with appropriate musical language. As the lesson proceeded to individual work on rhythmic riffs pupils demonstrated facility in keyboard performance. Year 7 composition work on the theme of a space voyage was often imaginative. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs attain as well as other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils do not always display the exceptional attainment that might be expected.

196. The standards of work seen during the inspection are above average in Year 11. Amongst the small groups in Years 10 and 11, pupils demonstrate some good performance skills. Most have reached appropriate standards in instrumental grade examinations, with one pupil, exceptionally, working towards the highest grade on the flute. In Year 11 listening work pupils demonstrated a range of knowledge on vocal and instrumental styles of a range of historical periods. Year 10 pupils were able to articulate some interesting ideas about the music of Schoenberg which was unfamiliar to them. They listened carefully to extracts played from his work and attempted some effective pastiche composition work based on his ideas. Their manipulation of more conventional diatonic composition is generally sound and always

written in neat notation. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs attain as well as other pupils. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve the very good standards that might be expected in relation to their higher earlier attainment.

197. Pupils achieve well in music at the end of Year 9, especially considering the often limited musical experience they have on entry to the school. The achievement of the few pupils taking GCSE music is good overall, and, in a few cases, very good. In all year groups, progress in the acquisition of listening skills, performance and understanding of terminology and musical structures is particularly good. Progress in appraisal and composing skills is more wide ranging.

198. Pupils' attitudes to music in lessons, instrumental lessons and extra-curricular work are very good in all year groups. However, the number of pupils continuing to study music in Years 10 and 11 is low for the size of the school. Pupils work with high levels of concentration and enthusiasm once settled to their tasks. Behaviour is very good. When required to work in small groups pupils act sensibly and they show respect for equipment. In extra-curricular work pupils are willing to assist teachers to prepare the rehearsal space.

199. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In individual lessons, teaching was at least good and often very good. There are no unsatisfactory features in the teaching. Peripatetic teaching is also good. The most significant strength in teaching is the very good, and often excellent, management of pupils so that pupils are well-disciplined and eager to participate in lessons. Teachers treat pupils firmly and fairly, but with good humour and frequent encouragement, which enables pupils to establish good working habits in all lessons. All lessons are well-planned. Pupils learn particularly well where teachers communicate the objectives of the lesson clearly and reinforce them at regular intervals. They use effective questioning, often supported by proficient demonstrations on piano or voice, to ensure all understand the work to be completed. Teachers set high levels of challenge to pupils and move lessons forward at a brisk pace, often with sequences of short timed goals which pupils are all eager to achieve. In very good Year 8 and 9 lessons, the teacher set high expectations for pupils which were successfully achieved by a seamless combination of the above skills. The rate of working in such an orderly and exciting environment enabled pupils to learn very quickly, and integrate performing and listening skills which, in turn, reinforced their understanding of structures and ideas studied in other lessons. Teaching occasionally becomes highly sophisticated. In a Year 9 class the teacher skilfully challenged pupils' notions of serious music being 'boring'. The class debate and musical examples provided by the teacher palpably raised pupils' awareness of aesthetic issues and significantly enhanced their spiritual and cultural understanding. Teachers make good use of assessment. In lessons many short-term targets are set and invariably achieved.

200. The management of the music department is very good. Teachers have a clear idea of what they wish to achieve which is reflected in the on-going review of the curriculum, schemes of work and the targets set for pupils' achievement. Peripatetic teachers are well-integrated into the department and assist effectively in raising the standards of instrumental performance. They keep good records of pupils' progress and provide regular reports to the school. The quality of assessment in music is good. Reports to parents do not always make it explicit what pupils can do, and what they need to do to improve further. Of the many good features of the curriculum, pupils' educational experience is particularly enriched by the work provided on a range of world music topics, and by the rigour and quality of the teaching of literacy skills in Years 7 and 8. The department runs a choir and wind band which produce creditable work. Teachers recognise that there is a need to involve more pupils in extra-curricular activities on a more regular basis, and to initiate more visits to external music events. The presentation of the music accommodation is very good, with good quality

displays and orderly arrangements of equipment. The opportunities for the use of computers in composition work are not yet sufficiently developed across both key stages.

201. Since the previous inspection, the music department has made very good progress. Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 have improved significantly. The quality of teaching is now more demanding and rigorous. The department has further plans for improvement and has the potential to do very well.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils enjoy physical education, generally work hard and make efforts to improve.
- Boys achieve standards in rugby that are above average for their age.
- The acting head of department and school's senior management are committed to improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' skills in improving their work through planning and evaluation are below average.
- The current scheme of work does not provide planned opportunities for pupils to become independent learners.
- Pupils' work is not assessed and recorded often enough and, where it is, assessments are not related to National Curriculum or GCSE criteria.

202. GCSE results for 2001 were below the national average. The results were also below average for subjects in this school. However, many pupils did as well in physical education as they did in their other subjects. In the previous year, the first year the GCSE examination had been offered in the school, pupils did much better and results were only just below the national average.

203. By the end of Year 9 standards in physical education are average as they were at the time of the previous inspection. As pupils enter the school with average standards, this represents satisfactory achievement. Standards in major team games are higher and more consistent than in other elements of physical education. Standards in rugby are above average. Boys are able to kick, pass and catch the ball with good technique and can tackle safely but effectively. For all pupils, the ability to select and apply skills and tactics is below average and pupils' skills in evaluating and improving their performance are under-developed.

204. By the end of Year 11 standards are average overall. Given their attainment at the end of Year 9 this represents satisfactory achievement. When using the trampoline pupils are able to execute a number of jumps and drops smoothly and imaginatively, with higher attaining pupils reaching a good standard of physically challenging and complex movements. In aerobics, girls link movements with style and imagination. Standards in rugby are above average and the Year 11 team has reached the semi-finals of a national competition. Pupils know how and why they prepare for an activity and have a good knowledge of fitness and health, for example, in the importance of preparation for and recovery after exercise and the benefits of physical activity to a healthy lifestyle. In one health and fitness activity, pupils sustained a high level of strenuous activity and devised their own cool down routines at the end. As in Years 7 to 9, pupils' skills of observation, analysis and evaluation of their own and others' performance are below average. Standards in the theoretical aspects of the GCSE course are below average. Pupils have under-developed research and extended writing skills and even higher attaining pupils rely too much on the teacher's notes in acquiring their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

205. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Talented pupils, both boys and girls, are given encouragement and support, make good progress and go on to achieve much success in local and national competitions.

206. The quality of teaching and of the learning it promotes is satisfactory. During the inspection teaching was satisfactory overall and in around one third of lessons it was good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about physical education. A strength of the teaching lies in the very good relationships teachers have with their pupils which helps to create a co-operative atmosphere for learning in almost all lessons. Pupils' attitudes are good and the vast majority of pupils enjoy the subject and want to learn. Only in one lesson, a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson, were attitudes unsatisfactory so that little learning took place. In this lesson pupils came unprepared for work, with a significant minority not even having a pen, and spent most of the lesson talking to and across each other. Teachers have a good knowledge of the activities they teach so that pupils learn correct techniques and improve their performance, for example, in a successful Year 7 hockey lesson where girls learned to hold the hockey stick in the most effective way to allow flexibility of movement and accuracy of control. Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to take responsibility for analysing and planning improvements to their work. Pupils are not usually involved in making decisions about their own learning and are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. For example, the warm up sessions at the beginning of lessons are nearly always teacher-led and teacher-directed. Within lessons pupils rarely work in groups of similar attainment where they can challenge and test themselves and each other rigorously and competitively. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning, including in GCSE groups where the heavy dependence on worksheet material and teacher's notes restricts pupils' development of the essential skills of independence, research and responsibility. Ongoing assessment in lessons is good with teachers' interventions helping pupils improve. Procedures for assessing pupils at the end of a unit of work are unsatisfactory and have not been consistently applied because of the staffing difficulties the department has experienced in the recent past. What assessments there are, are not related to National Curriculum or GCSE criteria. Participation rates are satisfactory but non-participants are not always involved as observers or helpers.

207. Leadership and management in physical education are satisfactory. During the absence of the head of department, and other staffing difficulties, the acting head of department has provided clear educational direction and invaluable support to both temporary and supply teachers. Both she and the school's senior management are committed to improving current standards. There is much to do. The current scheme of work does not provide planned opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and does not give a broad balance of outdoor activities for boys. There are good baseline assessments in Year 7 but assessment procedures are not yet sufficiently developed to enable pupils' progress to be monitored and tracked as they move through the school, and to enable assessment findings to be used to group pupils in lessons in line with their prior attainment. There is an urgent need to undertake a risk assessment of facilities and accommodation.

208. Given the staffing difficulties the department has experienced since the time of the previous inspection, it is remarkable that improvement has been satisfactory and there has been no significant fall in standards. The excellent accommodation has undoubtedly helped, enabling a full programme of activities to proceed throughout the winter months. Extra-curricular activities have also helped; the good provision for girls and satisfactory provision for boys, has given pupils opportunities to maintain and improve their performance out of lesson times.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

Strengths

- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed and have high expectations of pupils.
- Teachers use a variety of activities and approaches to gain and maintain pupils' interest and involvement and make good use of the time available.
- Teachers provide firm, friendly class management to ensure orderly lessons and good progress.
- Assessment arrangements are very good and are used effectively to support pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not provide enough challenge for the highest attainers.
- The department does not make enough use of ICT to develop learning.
- There is not enough time allowed on the timetable for the religious education course that all pupils follow in Years 10 and 11.

209. In the 2001 GCSE examination there was only a small number of candidates. The results at both grades A*-C and A*-G were below the national average with girls performing better than boys by the same difference as that found nationally. Most of the girls' results were better or equal to those that they achieved in other subjects whereas boys did not do as well as they did in other subjects. In relation to their attainment when they started the GCSE course, pupils' examination results indicate satisfactory achievement. The results have shown little variation from year to year.

210. The standard of work of Year 9 pupils is above average. They have a secure knowledge of the subject gained in earlier years being able, for instance, to give a sensible account of the life of Jesus and of other religious leaders. They know that religions have sacred writings and special buildings and understand the significance of symbols and symbolic actions used in worship. They understand some of the relationships between faiths and see why there are beliefs and practices common to Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Because they have gained an appreciation of how believers' lives are affected by their faith, they understand the significance of such experiences as pilgrimage and apply the teachings of Jesus to issues like discrimination and prejudice. Through considering their own life experiences and exploring the uniqueness of human nature and the nature of God they are beginning to develop their own system of values and beliefs. Because they have concentrated on developing understanding and forming opinions, they are less confident in describing accurately some of the differences found between different Christian groups and in their knowledge of some world faiths.

211. When they enter the school at age 11, pupils' attainment is average. During Years 7 to 9 pupils of all attainments, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, achieve well. A notable feature is the progress made in lessons by pupils with impaired vision. This is the result of excellent planning, support from staff and the provision of well-chosen learning resources. For instance, in a lesson about the significance of Jesus based on classical pictures, these pupils considered the message of the empty cross compared with a crucifix. There is little difference between the standard of work of boys and girls.

212. For pupils in Year 11 the standard of work seen is average. Those following the GCSE course have a sound knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Judaism and Christianity and how these beliefs affect their lives and opinions on moral and social issues. Their latest piece of course work describes in detail the rituals and customs associated with Easter and Passover, explores their significance and evaluates the importance of festivals and traditions for the development and survival of faiths. Compared with their previous attainment, their achievement is good. The majority of pupils follow the core course which does not lead to an examination. By Year 11 they can discuss such issues as euthanasia, poverty and war, offering their own views but also understanding how people with religious faith view these issues. For example, they relate opinions about euthanasia and abortion to the concept of sanctity of life based on its creation by God. In the limited number of topics studied in the time available, pupils' attainment is above average and achievement is good. However, because the time allocated to the course is only half the national average, one lesson per fortnight, their overall standard of attainment is below that expected nationally. Boys and girls and those with different attainment make similar progress.

213. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all year groups, with some examples of very good and excellent lessons. All but one class is taught by one of two teachers well qualified in the subject. Their secure subject knowledge allows them to challenge pupils so that they gain genuine understanding of what religion is all about, rather than merely learning about its externals. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed and this enthusiasm communicates itself to pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of attitude and behaviour and their class management is very good; it is consistent, firm and friendly. This results in orderly lessons in which most pupils behave well, make the progress expected and feel secure in expressing their opinions and beliefs. Lessons are well planned and each lesson includes several different activities which gain and maintain pupils' interest. Textbooks, religious artefacts, pictures and video clips act as stimuli and learning resources. Lessons not only inform but challenge pupils to form opinions and develop empathy. For instance, a series of lessons about war and conflict in Year 11 was based on a modern fictional war film and pupils responded well to the challenge of describing the emotions and feelings of some of the characters. They explore the effects of experiences on values and beliefs. The pace of learning is good and homework is regularly set. Although learning in the majority of lessons is recorded in graphical or brief written accounts, an assessed task at the end of each unit of work demands more extended written responses. These are imaginative and challenging and result in some excellent responses. One Year 9 boy produced a video using Power Point as a tourist presentation encouraging believers to participate in a pilgrimage. In response to the same task a girl produced a very high quality presentation using overhead projector transparencies. During lessons there is frequent referral to earlier work which makes learning secure.

214. Teaching successfully answers the needs of pupils of all attainments including those with learning difficulties and those with impaired vision. Most tasks are set at different levels and there is support material geared to need. Assessment tasks are open-ended allowing pupils to respond at their own level and to demonstrate progress. Because little indication is given of the level of response that is possible, and specific targets are not set for them, the highest attainers, including those who are gifted and talented, are not always sufficiently challenged. The progress of pupils with special needs is enhanced by effective liaison between teachers and support assistants.

215. There is a very good subject plan to develop literacy skills. In lessons its effect is seen in the inclusion of activities which are designed to develop listening, reading, speaking and writing and key words for the subject are displayed and listed in pupil planners. The best teaching develops pupils' study skills teaching them how to obtain information from a variety of resources. Marking of pupils' work is helpful but does not give sufficient attention to presentation and literacy development. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT for research and presentation. Through its content, methods of teaching and insistence on good behaviour the subject makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

216. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department is committed to the achievement of high standards. She is well aware of the standards of pupils' work and of teaching within the department and has strategies for further improvement. Schemes of work are carefully constructed to achieve the objectives of the Wakefield Agreed Syllabus and to develop pupils' literacy skills. Learning outcomes are carefully written for pupils of different attainments. Assessment arrangements are very good. They include both teachers' and pupils' gradings which are discussed in a way which involves pupils setting their own targets and teachers using results to influence planning.

217. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have adequate time for the subject. In Years 10 and 11, standards have improved because religious education is now taught as a separate subject by specialist teachers. The level of resources is now good except for the absence of computers in the subject rooms. There is still inadequate time for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus or to follow a short GCSE course and this results in good teaching and progress not producing the level of attainment that might be expected at the end of Year 11.

The inspection included brief inspections of business education and drama at the request of the school.

BUSINESS EDUCATION

218. In the 2001 GCSE business studies examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C was broadly in line with the national average. Almost all pupils gained passes at grades A* to G. Boys did not do quite as well as girls, reflecting the national pattern. Pupils' results in the subject matched the average across all the subjects they took. However, in 1999 and 2000, pupils gained better results in business studies than they did on average in their other subjects.

219. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment in Year 11 is above average. Pupils generally understand the technical terms associated with the subject. For example, they can explain the difference between batch production and mass production and understand the difference between horizontal and vertical integration into a business. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils' coursework grades were disappointing but the department

is working hard to overcome this weakness. 'Mock' examination results indicate that the current Year 11 are attaining higher standards in the subject than last year's examination results suggest. Pupils enter the business studies course with a wide range of attainment at the end of Year 9. Their current above average standards at the end of Year 11 therefore represent good achievement.

220. Teaching and learning are generally good. Teachers plan lessons carefully but, in some lessons, there is little evidence of planning to meet the specific needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment. Teachers place clear emphasis on the importance of the key words in the subject. They question pupils effectively and make good use of any incorrect answers. Hence pupils are confident and happy to respond to the teacher's questions. Teachers share the aims of the lesson with pupils and then check, at the end of the lesson, that these aims have been achieved. This helps to reinforce pupils' learning and gives them the satisfaction of identifying the progress they have made. Occasionally, teaching and learning are very good. In a Year 10 lesson for lower attainers, the teacher provided a clear demonstration to lead pupils into an exercise on the production of paper bags. Pupils concentrated well on the demonstration, worked well in a team, and showed real enthusiasm as they quickly developed their production line.

221. The quality of pupils' learning generally reflects the quality of the teaching they receive. However in one lesson for Year 11, a few pupils arrived at the lesson with no inclination to work and a wish to disrupt the lesson. Although some higher attaining pupils managed to continue with their work, other pupils were distracted by the poor behaviour of their classmates. Under these circumstances, pupils did not learn as effectively as they should have done in the lesson. Although most pupils have at least satisfactory attitudes to their work, there is, in some lessons, a tendency for a few pupils to chat when they should be concentrating on their written tasks. This lack of concentration on what is important clearly reduces the effectiveness of their learning.

222. There was no report on business studies in the previous inspection report so it is not possible to judge the department's progress since that time.

DRAMA

223. In the 2001 drama GCSE examination the number of pupils gaining A*-G grades was slightly below the national average. The number gaining A*-C grades was well below the national average. Results in drama were among the weakest in the school. Boys' results were lower than those of girls. Lower attaining pupils secured good results in relation to their earlier attainment and therefore achieved well. Very few pupils gained high grades.

224. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 is average. Pupils are confident in group performance, developing evaluative skills and the ability to role play. In a Year 8 lesson on 'anachronism' pupils displayed thoughtful character work through well-focused devising skills. They were able to discuss their ideas with some assurance, but the quality of oral work when in character was sometimes weak. In a Year 9 lesson on stage-fighting, pupils were uniformly keen participants and the majority could perform required actions with some skill. Their response to the teacher's questions was more wide-ranging and several pupils were less secure in the understanding of theoretical points. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls, and pupils of all levels of attainment make similar progress.

225. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 11 is average. The standards of work seen during the inspection indicate a better level of attainment than that suggested by the 2001 examination results. Year 11 practical work varies widely in quality and level of understanding. A lesson derived from the study of character on the issue of confession, displayed some effective devising skills in the production of polished improvisation. Many pupils develop confident negotiating skills in the construction of dialogue and action. In a different Year 11 lesson, pupils were less assured in group work and found it difficult to articulate their ideas on appropriate staging, lighting and music for their proposed pieces. Pupils' written work showed some competent self-evaluation and scene analysis. The attainment of girls is generally higher than that of boys. Lower attaining pupils generally make good progress.

226. Pupils achieve satisfactorily at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Progress in the practical aspects of the curriculum is generally secure, except where impeded by poor attendance. Progress in developing an understanding of theoretical drama is uneven.

227. Pupils' attitudes to drama are good at both key stages. Behaviour is very good and pupils respect teachers. When involved in group work, pupils participate in a friendly and co-operative manner.

228. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and occasionally good. Teachers are dedicated drama specialists who communicate some enthusiasm for the subject. They have very good standards of classroom management and set clear ground rules for drama lessons enabling pupils to develop appropriate working habits. Teachers have no discipline problems and provide a supportive and encouraging lesson environment in which pupils can generally flourish. In the most effective lessons, teachers work at a brisk pace, set a range of short, timed tasks, which build up to an imaginative learning experience in which pupils are keen to participate. In a good Year 9 lesson on stage-fighting the teacher demonstrated meticulous planning, mixing theory, demonstration and practical involvement, to motivate pupils' learning to the full. While one half of the class were rehearsing fight moves, the rest of the class was provided with thoughtful question sheets. However some pupils were too distracted by the exciting practical work taking place, to complete their questions adequately. Teaching sometimes makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social and moral education, as in a Year 7 lesson on the theme of bullying, where pupils were required to contribute their ideas on bullying before acting out related scenarios. In the teaching inspected in Year 11, planning was less effective. Whilst the teacher clearly established the aims of the lesson, too much time was allotted to practical work, leaving little time for detailed self-evaluation by pupils. There was limited challenge leading to some lack of motivation among pupils. In a minority of lessons teachers do not ensure that all pupils fully understand what is expected of them.

229. Pupils' learning is positively enhanced by the good quality of management evident in the drama department. Teachers undertake rigorous analysis of pupils' attainment, and the recent dip in GCSE results has generated some imaginative strategies for raising achievement. The success of these strategies is evident in the higher standards now being seen in Years 10 and 11. The drama studio is smartly presented and sets a professional tone to lessons. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not have access to a computer in drama. Learning is enhanced by the frequent opportunities for pupils to be involved in public performances, including the pantomime by Years 7 to 9 and regular productions by Years 10 and 11. Visits to theatres are limited in frequency. The department remains much the same as it was at the time of the previous inspection.